‘You’re in Your Own Time Now’: Understanding Current Experiences of Transition to Civilian Life in Scotland

Final Report

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FiMT forces in mind trust SUCCESSFUL SUSTAINABLE TRANSITION
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Please note that this report is based on research undertaken by the study team, and the analysis and comments thereafter do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of FiMT or any participating stakeholders and agencies. The authors take responsibility for any inaccuracies or omissions in the report.

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Foreword

In my role as Scottish Veterans Commissioner, I work to advocate for our veterans and their families, working collaboratively across boundaries, to influence policy and service delivery and make life better for the ex-Service community who live in Scotland. This includes helping ensure the transition journey from military Service back to civilian life is as straightforward and successful as possible for the Service leaver and their family.

Military to civilian transition is recognised as a multifaceted experience and there is still no real consensus concerning the elements of success, the procedures that support transition, or indeed when transition begins and ends. Through studies such as this one we have been able to recognise the important contributions of the Armed Forces Covenant, the UK and

Scotland Strategies for our Veterans and the support of the numerous other stakeholders and how these have ensured the development of a clearer focus and strategy in relation to transition.

This report illustrates how partnership working is evident across all levels of those who support our armed forces in Scotland, further highlighted by their commitment in signing up to the Covenant. This demonstrates a willingness to support Service personnel and values the contributions made by the whole armed forces and veteran community both to local employment and communities. The report also provides a comprehensive insight in to the transitional support needs of veterans, Service personnel and their partners from a Scotland-wide perspective.

Families also experience the transition journey and can support serving members in several influential and emotional ways. This report addresses these matters in some detail. It highlights the demand for support services and the need for these services to be maintained and where possible, to be expanded to support the wider armed forces community including partners and children.

You will read in the report that the study advocates the development of Welfare Centres to become central points for educational and entrepreneurial activity for armed forces partners, enhancing their opportunities and ultimately supporting the Service person during and after their military career. The study raises issues around the current funding system is Scotland with respect to the development of an educational transition pathway, potentially creating disadvantage for partners and children who may wish to continue to higher education. It highlights the work still to be done in relation to the recognition and consolidation of qualifications from non-UK nationals. Finally, it recognises that as military service in the UK continues to evolve, the process of transition will need to remain agile and adaptable to ensure effective transition for all.

It is essential to have sound evidence on which to base improvement to policies and services for veterans in Scotland and I welcome this this significant and informative piece of work.

Susie Hamilton

Scottish Veterans Commissioner

1 Executive Summary

1.1 Background

The challenge to the UK in terms of its investment in Service personnel transitioning in and out of the Armed Forces is a complex one. While some may remain in service until the age of 60, it is recognised that the majority will retire or move into civilian life beforehand. "Transition is the term commonly used to describe the period of change around reintegration into civilian life from the Armed Forces" (Scottish Veterans Commissioner, 2020[1]). For those personnel leaving after a long-term career this transition becomes a crucial factor, not only for the country to retain high quality personnel and knowledge, but also to address the continuing need to recruit and train high quality personnel to serve in both regular and reserve roles, and to meet the countless defence needs this presents. For the country, and the Ministry of Defence (MOD), managing this changeover is important as it embodies a resource that can continue to give value or a burden that can incur both personal and societal costs. A key aspect of this process is that service people need to recognise the value they bring to society, and society needs to value that contribution in realistic and constructive ways both during and after service.

The Scottish Government has stated its aim to "make Scotland the most attractive destination for service leavers and their families, offering high living standards, great job prospects and a society that respects and values their contribution" (Scottish Veterans Commissioner, 2020). In civilian life people change jobs regularly and it is not unusual for families to move house, sometimes over considerable distances into new communities very different to the one they have left. Whether in terms of employment or living space these changes are generally completed with minimal support either from employers or communities. The Armed Forces pride themselves on being composed of highly competent, professional, confident individuals who are resourceful, adaptable, problem solvers. The question is therefore immediately created as to why transition should be regarded as such a significant issue of concern for this latter group in comparison to their civilian counterparts. This question is even more acute for Scotland where the Scots' national self-image is of a welcoming liberally minded country that

[1] http://www.veteransscotland.co.uk/docs/Research/Scottish-Veterans-Commissioner-Positive-Futures-Employment-Skills-and-Learning-2020-Online-1.pdf

is proud of the military, and where in theory, transition should be easier. These aspects are addressed in this study through a deeper comparison of life in the Armed Forces with that in the wider community when viewed through the lens of the service leaver and their partner.

The Armed Forces offer a working environment where the sense of unity and team spirit is highly unusual if not unique in the employment context. There is a feeling of shared purpose where a sense of mission is actively encouraged in every aspect of life from training courses, exercises, and the wider social life of military units. This has a positive expression – to defend the UK, or more locally "to protect my team, friends or family" – but it also has an active negative expression, with clearly identified threats or enemies. Against those values, other motivators such as "making a profit" or "delivering a better service" look pale.

The military also offers a binding spirit of excellence and organisational self-belief which contrasts sharply with the ethos of potential failure widely promoted in some parts of civilian life. These strands of contrast pejoratively unite in the higher features of the State most obviously in the ceremonies of Remembrance Day or Trooping the Colour but also in local air displays and open days which have no civilian equivalent. Reinforcing that sense of unity and excellence the military organise their people's lives in all aspects from how they spend their leisure time, what they eat, where they live and even how they walk (march) about their workplace. This loss of this tight, positive structure must be bewildering to a service leaver, particularly for those with a long service history. They are entering a world which is altogether more open and uncertain and above all where personal choices have to be made sometimes with minimum guidance, and advice may have to be self-researched. Even the work or wider values of the community of which they are now part may require sensitive exploration.

The veteran's population in Scotland is estimated to be in the region of 240,000 with an estimated additional 1,800 ex-Service personnel and their families planning to settle in Scotland annually. For the service leaver settling in Scotland these issues of contrast may be more extreme. Most obviously, in the military the allegiance is the UK state and Government; the Scots population is much more divided on that matter. While the Scottish Government appears to extend a welcome to veterans and embraces the Covenant on all levels of its structure, there are features of life in Scotland, which may suggest otherwise. This paradox between policy and practice is clearly evident in several areas explored in this study.

The report provides a detailed account of the Armed Forces milieu in Scotland set against developments and future plans for the expansion of several bases across the country. This set the scene for the study and allowed for an improved understanding of the implications and the outcomes of the study and how findings may be applied. Throughout the study we met with an Advisory Board made up of key personnel.

1.2 Aim

The overall aim of our project was to provide an evidence base that would influence and underpin policy making and service delivery to enable ex-service personnel and their families to lead successful civilian lives.

1.3 Objectives

This study explored four objectives, which relate to enhancing the evidence base around transition in Scotland and using this evidence to enable improvements in policy and practice. These objectives strongly align with the stated mission and vision of FiMT: "*to enable ex-Service personnel and their families to make a successful and sustainable transition to civilian life*". They include:

- An in-depth understanding of the UK research landscape relating to service leavers, including gaps in the extant evidence base, generated through a detailed literature review.
- A substantive improvement in the understanding of a range of key demographic factors for service leavers/veterans settling in Scotland. Generated through quantitative analysis of data through an online survey.
- The concerns and aspirations of service leavers settling in Scotland and understanding their support needs – qualitative interviews with service leavers/veterans.
- Decision makers will be empowered to make improvements in policy and service provision based on the evidence generated and recommendations.

1.4 Method

The starting point for the study was a systematic review of both academic and grey literature, the former to establish gaps and the latter to develop an understanding of the context in which the study was ultimately conducted. Nine different data collection techniques were

utilised throughout the study. Each stage of the data collection supported the next in terms of the detail gathered on specific aspects of the study. The literature review also provided background to the questions developed for the three surveys.

To enhance our demographic mapping, and once we had been granted Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee (MODREC) approval, we conducted three online surveys. The first two targeted Service personnel, veterans, and their families. Online surveys 1 and 2 were designed to explore a range of key demographic factors for service leavers/ veterans settling in Scotland, such as distribution across local authorities. The outcomes of these surveys helped form the basis for the realist interview agendas conducted in Stage 2 and facilitated the access of a sample for interviews. A third survey was also conducted to investigate the employment trends and desired skills of veterans in Scottish companies with/without recognised Covenant status. Alongside this, we engaged with organisations that provide support to service leavers and veterans in Scotland through 34 in-depth interviews, to help us to establish what the experience of military transition in Scotland should look like.

The outcomes of the surveys allowed us to ask more in-depth questions in the interviews which in turn highlighted areas where a more comprehensive examination was required through a series of 'deep dives'. The number of responses to the questionnaires was 211 from veterans, 93 from Service personnel and 51 from employers. The analysis process was varied and related to the data set itself. Questionnaires yielded a high level of both quantitative and qualitative data much of which was substantiated in the subsequent interviews, focus groups and validation events. An overview of the key outcomes of the study are provided below followed by recommendations.

1.5 Outcomes of the study

Overall, it is evident that there is solid support for veterans in Scotland, starting at the top with the Scottish Government, who along with the other Governments in the United Kingdom, launched the Strategy for Our Veterans in November 2018. The Strategy set out a vision, principles, and various aims to support veterans and their families; the Scottish

Government published their refreshed action plan this year[2]. The very existence of a Cabinet post with "veterans" in its title – in this case held by the deputy leader of the SNP – is a very positive indication of a national welcome to members of the Armed Forces community. This is echoed through the formal structures in Government. So, for example, all 32 Scottish local authorities, all NHS Health Boards, most Scottish universities, and the Scottish Government itself have signed the Armed Forces Covenant. In addition, since 2014[3] Scotland has had the specific post of a Scottish Veterans' Commissioner whose office has produced a range of valuable reports related to key aspects of the Armed Forces Covenant and its implementation in Scotland.

Importantly, military tradition has been incorporated into the Scottish image. Words associating Scotland as a nation with military formations occur commonly, for example the Scots Guards, Royal Scots, King's Own Scottish Borderers, Royal Scots Fusiliers, Scots Dragoon Guards, and even the modern Royal Regiment of Scotland. Moreover, it is possible to point to several cultural features that would suggest to Armed Forces families that they are welcome in Scotland. These features include but are not limited to: the proud and very well-known histories and traditions of the Scottish infantry and cavalry regiments; the fact that there are very visible memorials throughout Scotland; the well-publicised role of the 51st Highland Division in World War 2 (WW2) at Dunkirk, the Western Desert campaign and in north-west Europe; the importance of naval bases at Faslane, Rosyth, and Scapa Flow in both World Wars; the well-known role Scotland played in providing training bases for WW2 commandos; the world-wide reputation of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo; the well evaluated contribution of 'Army at the Fringe' and the association of the national musical instrument - the bagpipes - with the military.

Our study has supported evidence and demonstrated several similarities with other studies[4] that have previously been conducted in relation to the experiences of transition in England and Wales. While not unexpected, it was interesting to note that many of the concerns experienced by the Scottish group in the process of transition were in line with those in other

[2] strategy-veterans-taking-strategy-forward-scotland-refreshed-action-plan.pdf
[3] The third Scottish Veterans Commissioner was appointed in 2022.
[4] Discussed in greater detail through the literature review in our Interim Report: https://www.napier.ac.uk/-/media/youre-in-your-own-time-now--interim-report.ashx

parts of the UK. Our study provides a more nuanced understanding of the transitional support needs for veterans, Service personnel and their partners contextualised in Scotland. It has highlighted the demand for services and the need for these services to be continued and where possible, to be expanded to support the wider Armed Forces community including partners and children in relation to educational opportunities, employment, and wraparound childcare facilities. There remains serious work to be done in relation to the recognition of people's qualifications both from commonwealth groups and across the UK. The potential for the development of Welfare Centres to be so much more than they currently are and to draw from the positive examples such as the Hive[5] (which is an RAF information and referral centre for the Service community, including their families, veterans, Reservists, and civilians on Station and promotes employment and entrepreneurial opportunities). The constructive use of social media by the Wives Committee at Lossiemouth should be promoted. Where social media has been used, updated, and maintained it has proved to be of extreme help. Another example of this is evident in some of the council websites such as Moray, where specific information for Armed Forces Personnel and their families can be found. It has also identified some areas where other service providers could be included and identified opportunities for future partnership working. Moreover, a major difference in this study is the clear pattern of partnership working evident across all levels of those who support our Armed Forces in Scotland. The commitment across these groups by signing up to the Covenant demonstrates Scotland's willingness not only to supporting Service personnel but also to valuing the contributions made by veterans and service families both to local employment and communities.

Moving from the statements of intention and governmental structures to actions, the actual strength of that welcome was not always clear and there still remain areas where development is required to enhance Armed Forces Personnel's experiences of our education. The current funding system is Scotland mitigates against the development of an educational transition pathway and creates disadvantage for partners and children who may wish to develop on to higher education. Furthermore, differences in Scottish and English qualifications create barriers in recognising these and its application in education or

[5] https://www.raf.mod.uk/serving-families/hive-finder/

employment. For instance, evidence from our study indicates that most of those choosing to transition to Scotland from other parts of the UK have historically not received enough Scotland specific information or support, although there are signs this is changing. There is perhaps a lack of awareness in some areas of Veterans Champions across local authorities in Scotland, although this information is available on the excellent Veterans Assist Scotland website run by Veterans Scotland. Positive relocation to Scotland was usually identified by individuals who were Scottish by birth, had a Scottish partner or had immediate family for support.

Finally, the service leaver thinking of settling in Scotland needs to accommodate the fact that in leaving the Armed Forces they are moving from a UK-based organisation to a separate nation within the UK. This change will be most marked for families physically moving from elsewhere in the UK. Scotland, particularly since Devolution, has developed in ways that are superficially similar to the rest of the UK, but which are importantly different. Most obviously there is a devolved parliament and government, which has made full use of powers to pass new laws on top of the traditional areas of difference for example in the criminal justice and education systems. Taxation rates are different in Scotland to the rest of the UK, and so too are support systems and benefits such as child welfare, and prescription charges. The political landscape of Scotland is also unique – most obviously through the strong presence of parties promoting independence because of which the participation of Scots as members of and bases for the UK Armed Forces. All of these, and other factors should weigh on the service leaver, and so, the support that is provided for them.

1.6 Recommendations

The research findings strongly support the following recommendations to ensure the continued transition support for veterans, Service personnel, and their partners living in Scotland. The recommendations have been grouped under four categories Policy, Practice, Education and Research.

1.6.1 Policy

- The mobility factors of Serving Personnel are peculiar aspects of the demography of that population which are often not captured. This has significant resource

implications for local councils and services. Community Planning operates at a macro strategic level with a 15-year planning projection. To work effectively in this context the military themselves must be active participants with local planning groups and clarify their long-term plans for bases. Likewise, there is a need for community planning to take into consideration and potentially work in partnership with the Armed Forces in their respective areas to be able to meet the demands of this growing population.

- The overall context for improvement activity in Scottish education is provided through the National Improvement Framework (NIF) which is revised and published annually by the Scottish Government. The NIF highlights an increase in the number of children and young people who require additional support in most schools and draws attention to learners affected by interrupted learning. Interrupted learning is seen as being a significant factor in the education of Armed Forces children and more requires to be understood about its impact together with the incidence of additional support needs in this part of the pupil population. This recognition identifies additional support needs, and specifically interrupted learning, as a significant area for further support from Scottish Government.

- There is a need for more in-depth work into the experiences of veterans in custody in Scotland. Statistics from the Scottish Prison Services highlight some of the current trends in return to custody, suggesting a 'revolving door' and a lack of suitable rehabilitation opportunities for this group.

- All councils should implement a detailed information section on their webpages for Service personnel transitioning from England to Scotland. The Moray webpages provide a good framework which could be replicated.

- Serving Personnel deployed to Scotland pay more VAT and Income Tax than the rest of the UK, despite the base being considered a UK entity. While this is mitigated by the MoD for Serving Personnel it is not the case for veterans. This imbalance requires further exploration. Moreover, for members of the Royal Navy once they start transition process, they immediately incur a reduction in pay, and this too requires further consideration.

- Further investigation is required to find a better mechanism to recognise or incorporate teaching and childcare qualifications from England and Wales in Scotland by developing intensive bridging courses. This pathway could be delivered in the Welfare Centres to support partners with children. Qualified partners could then apply these skills in providing 'behind the wire' childcare support.

- There is a need for funding between England and Scotland to promote opportunities for partners and families to engage in education and training opportunities for e.g., nursing and midwifery. Although both qualifications are recognised UK-wide, funding may need to be negotiated so that studies may be started in one part of the UK and completed in another. Similar consideration should also be given to teacher and nursery qualifications which currently are recognised very differently in each part of the country.

1.6.2 Practice

- Consideration should be given to approach transition in a less utilitarian and more individualised way, where a consistent approach is applied across the forces, but which involves a more targeted element of execution both pre- and post-transition. This could optimise engagement with resources at the right time and where they are most valuable. This is particularly important at the time when Service personnel are beginning to consider their transition options.

- Focusing on the self can be difficult for the individual, as a group mentality tends to be advocated whilst in service. This lack of focus on the outside world and their own transition can potentially further reduces engagement with pre-transition services. There is a need for support and a more defined early pathway to reduce negative outcomes of transition, by considering the emotional identity of the Service personnel.

- Transition 'mentors' should be appointed, who have themselves already experienced transition. Often those still in service are unable to relate to life outside the forces. Indeed, for those who maintain residence in Armed Forces accommodation there is little preparation for the reality of living in a civilian community. These mentors should

be available to Service personnel who are in the early stages of considering their transition.

- Welfare Centres Officers could engage veteran mentors, who could use the facility for the development of an informal buddy system to reduce misinformation by signposting to appropriate organisations.

- It was evident throughout the study that Armed Forces partners represent a strong force for change. Empowering this group and promoting some of the positive interventions, such as RAF Hive system, has the potential to offer developmental/educational/employment opportunities to partners, ultimately leading to the support of a smoother transition for the Serving personnel.

- A valuable MOD directive that promotes the importance of record keeping for families ought to be considered. These records could be identified as 'folder for families' and be like that provided for Serving personnel to record their career attainment and achievements, as well as include details to help support mobility, transitions, arrival and departure, and history of events and lived experiences.

- For those medically discharged, there is a need for better communication to support and prepare individuals for transition to the civilian world, including additional mental health awareness training for the Chain of Command, to help reduce the stigma associated with mental health.

- Defence Transition Services must consider better engagement practices with the local authorities in relation to future military accommodation models to enable improved planning for and integration to civilian and military communities. A good example is the lack of infrastructure to support childcare.

- Reticence amongst veterans in accepting support can be mitigated through early mapping of skills to increase self-confidence. Additionally, support from the MOD in the form of Keep in Touch (KIT) days after leaving the forces can help post-transition.

1.6.3 Education

- There is a need to stipulate/set aside 'protected time' for Serving personnel to use Learning Credits, as this would aid career development and progression both during and after service through the effective use of these credits.

- The use of Learning Credits by the partners of those medically discharged is recognised. Consideration of unused Learning Credits being made available for partner's pre or post transition would aid opportunities to study/upskill for potential employment. Strong consideration should be given for working more closely with the FE: HE network ADVANCE in Scotland would allow for a pilot of hybrid educational opportunities to be delivered across Welfare Centres for Serving personnel and partners.

- In order to promote integration into Higher Education there should be a pilot study conducted to promote stronger delivery links between the Armed Forces and HE and FE providers.

- Further work needs to be done into the recognition of the qualifications in the UK of commonwealth partners and how this might be harnessed for further education or employment opportunities.

- The funding system for further and higher education needs to be readdressed for Serving Personnel, veterans, and their families. The current funding system in Scotland mitigates against the development of an educational transition pathway and creates disadvantage for partners and children who may wish to develop on to higher education.

1.6.4 Research

- To be consistent with the Morgan review[6] action plan research should take account of the experience of Armed Forces children and their parents or carers. It also follows that taking account of the views of these groups should form an important component of any research methodology. Educational outcomes should be a focus of research

[6] Angela Morgan's review of implementation of additional support for learning (the ASL Review) was a significant moment in Scotland's educational landscape. The broad engagement that Angela undertook as part of the review had the voices of children and young people, parents and carers and professionals at its heart. It provided the opportunity to hear first-hand their experiences of how additional support for learning is being implemented across Scotland.

both from being a valuable source of evidence but also on the aspects of measurable performance which are most relevant and meaningful for this group of young people.

- Early Service Leavers - those with less than 4 years' service - are most vulnerable, as they get limited support on leaving. Often there may be unidentified pre-service issues, which can lead to further difficulties post-discharge. There is a need for further research to identify more support for this group/set aside.

- In terms of employment and employability, there needs to be work conducted on the development of consistent assessment tools, which would capture data on veteran employment across Scotland and the UK. This could be piloted with the uniformed services and extended where appropriate.

- The limited opportunities for many partners impact on their identity and development, yet this group represent the very backbone of the Armed Forces. Studies need to be conducted to explore career opportunities which could be promoted and enriched by developing the Welfare Centres to support education and entrepreneurial activities in partnership with their local HE: FE providers, ADVANCE, Scottish Innovation Centres, Skills Development Scotland, and other relevant groups.

- Little research has been done into the use of a comfort cub or bear to support a child to deal with the grief and loss associated with a deployed parent. In this study we observed the powerful impact of the military doll and the value placed on that by the military child. Further studies need to be conducted to both evaluate and enhance this process.

- Throughout the current study we became aware of impact of developments in diversity and inclusion policies relating to culture, mental health, families, and gender. While this study focused on transition out of the Armed Forces, there is now a need to explore current transition practices into the Armed Forces. All of which will impact on future recruitment, development, and retention of Service personnel.

- How the term 'veteran' is perceived and understood today needs further investigation. Our younger participants did not relate to this term. A veteran was defined as someone who had served in combat or who did national service. There is a

need to explore the current perceived definition of 'veteran' from the perspective of regulars, reservists, veterans, and the wider community.

- The outcomes of the study confirmed the decline of the popularity of Royal British Legion Scotland (RBLS) among the younger veteran group, who did not identify with them as a source of support. The implication here is that the RBLS need to investigate their current service provision and reconsider what they are offering to the younger veteran group and amend accordingly.

- An interesting outcome apparent across all the island data was the gratitude towards the Armed Forces for the training received. This group saw it as their responsibility and not that of the Armed Forces to find future employment. Moreover, veterans who had specifically moved to live on the islands, did so because of the morals and values of the island people. It would be useful to have a fuller understanding of the key aspects of island life that promote the perspectives above and attract veterans to live there.

- The Reserves are seen as central to the UK's defence, and reservists themselves are integrated frequently into regular forces' training and deployments. Within this study, many of the veterans maintained their links with the military after leaving regular military service by joining the reserves. A comparative study investigating the value of this practice in terms of supporting a softer transition needs further exploration. Moreover, the needs of Reservists and their families are like those of regular service families and should be included in any future research.

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Glossary of Terms

Additional Support Needs (ASN)	Additional support needs can arise, in the short or long term, from a variety of circumstances including: the learning environment family circumstances health or disability needs social and emotional factors Rights of children and young people with additional support needs.
Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)	ADES is an independent professional network for leaders and managers in education and children's services. We inform and influence education policy in Scotland working in partnership with local and national government, regional improvement Collaboratives, Education Scotland, COSLA and other relevant agencies.
Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP)	ASAP provides dedicated information, advice, and support to members of the Armed Forces Community in Scotland.
Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS)	The annual armed forces continuous attitude survey (AFCAS) is one of the main ways to gather information on the views and experiences of our personnel. The information from this survey helps shape policies for training, support, and the terms and conditions of service.
Armed Forces Covenant (AFC)	The Military Covenant or Armed Forces Covenant is a term introduced in 2000 into British public life to refer to the mutual obligations between the United Kingdom and His Majesty's Armed Forces.
Army Families Federation (AFF)	The AFF is the independent voice of Army families: Regular or Reserve, wherever they are based, whatever the make-up of their family. Throughout the UK and overseas, AFF offer advice and guidance on all aspects of Army life. AFF also work with other agencies such as MOD, government, charities, and other key players to strengthen our cause and fight for a fair deal for families everywhere.
Chain of Command (CO)	The chain of command is the line of authority and responsibility along which orders are passed within a military unit and between different units.
Career Transition Partnership (CTP)	The CTP is a strategic partnership between the MOD and Right Management Limited to deliver the MOD funded resettlement programme to entitled personnel leaving the Armed Forces.
Career Transition Workshop (CTW)	The workshop focuses on identifying SL's transferrable skills and developing an effective CV, learn how to enhance SL's personal brand and online profile, develop tactics for

	approaching the job market and get tips on successful interview techniques.
Co-ordinated Support Plans (CSPs)	A CSP is an education plan prepared by local authorities for certain children and young people with additional support needs. The plan outlines: their additional support needs objectives that have been set for them to achieve the support they need to achieve the objectives.
Early Service Leavers (ESL)	ESL are those who leave before serving four years in one of the Services.
Edinburgh Napier University (ENU)	Edinburgh Napier University is a public university in Edinburgh, Scotland. Napier Technical College, the predecessor of the university, was founded in 1964, taking its name from 16th-century Scottish mathematician and philosopher John Napier.
Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS)	The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) encourages employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same. The scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the Armed Forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.
Financial Aspects of Resettlement (FAR)	The FAR is a one-day course comprising of two briefings. The first, which is delivered by members of the Forces Pension Society's Pensions Team, is about all aspects of the pension entitlement; the second covers wider financial matters such as mortgages, insurances, and wills.
Freedom of Information (FOI)	The Freedom of Information Act 2000 provides public access to information held by public authorities. Public authorities include government departments, local authorities, the NHS, state schools and police forces. However, the Act does not necessarily cover every organisation that receives public money. For example, it does not cover some charities that receive grants and certain private sector organisations that perform public functions.
Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT)	Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) is a UK-wide spend-out trust, endowed by the National Lottery Community Fund. Its mission is to provide an evidence base that will influence and underpin policy making and service delivery to enable ex-Service personnel and their families to lead successful civilian lives.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	It explains the general data protection regime that applies to most UK businesses and organisations. It covers the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), tailored by the Data Protection Act 2018.
Joint Service Housing Advice Office (JSHAO)	Established in 1992, the JSHAO provides specific housing information to encourage Service personnel and their families to consider their civilian housing options at any point in their career.
Ministry of Defence (MOD)	The Ministry of Defence is the British government department responsible for implementing the defence policy set by Her Majesty's Government and is the headquarters of the British Armed Forces.
Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee (MODREC)	Ensures all research involving human participants either undertaken, funded or sponsored by the MOD meets nationally and internationally accepted ethical standards.
National Education for Scotland (NES)	NHS Education for Scotland (NES) is an education and training body and a national health board within NHS Scotland. Responsible for developing and delivering healthcare education and training for the NHS, health and social care sector and other public bodies. We have a Scotland-wide role in undergraduate, postgraduate, and continuing professional development.
National Health Service Scotland (NHS Scotland)	NHS Scotland is the publicly funded healthcare system in Scotland, and one of the four systems which make up the National Health Service in the United Kingdom. It operates fourteen territorial NHS boards across Scotland, seven special non-geographic health boards and NHS Health Scotland.
National Improvement Framework (NIF)	The National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan (NIF) was established in 2015 and set out a clear vision for Scottish Education based on delivering Excellence and Equity.
Naval Families Federation (NFF)	The NFF exists to give all currently serving Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel and their families the opportunity to have their views heard by those in positions of power. NFF work to remove disadvantage that may result from Service life.
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	PTSD is a mental health condition caused by a traumatic experience.
Royal Air Force Families Federation (RAF FF)	The RAF FF work to improve quality of life for the RAF family around the world – at work or at

	home. This could include resolving problems with access to education or healthcare, for children and young people; sorting out problems with accommodation, benefits, and visas; helping military spouses find meaningful employment.
Royal British Legion Scotland (RBLS)	In June 1921, Field Marshal Earl Haig formed the Royal British Legion Scotland (Legion Scotland) as it is now known, by bringing together several charities that had been established to assist those returning from the horrors of the First World War and residing in Scotland.
Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)	The SCQF is the national credit transfer system for all levels of qualifications in Scotland. Awards are classified under the framework at levels, and study undertaken at that level is valued in credit points.
Scottish Veterans Commissioner (SVC)	The SVC works to improve the lives and opportunities of the veterans community in Scotland. This is done by engaging with members of the ex-Service community. They also engage with the public, private and voluntary organisations that represent them.
Skills Development Scotland (SDS)	Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is Scotland's national skills body. They contribute to Scotland's sustainable economic growth by supporting people and businesses to develop and apply their skills.
Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)	The Scottish Qualifications Authority is the executive non-departmental public body of the Scottish Government responsible for accrediting educational awards.
Special educational Needs and Disability (SEND)	A child or young person has special educational needs and disabilities if they have a learning difficulty and/or a disability that means they need special health and education support, shorten to SEND.
Talent, Skills, Learning and Development (TSLD), formerly known as Training, Education, Skills, Recruiting and Resettlement (TESRR)	TSLD is a Directorate of the Ministry of Defence and is responsible, amongst other things, for tri-Service resettlement policy and for the delivery of resettlement services through the partnering agreement with Right Management (delivered via the Career Transition Partnership – CTP).
Veterans in Custody (ViC)	The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) has adopted the Scottish Information Commissioner's MOD Publication Scheme as updated in March 2021. Data from ViC have been provided by SPS.
Veterans Employability Strategic Group (VESG)	VESG formed in response to recommendations from the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's

	Employability, Skills, and Learning, has been refreshed in 2020 with two new co-chairs – a private sector director and a senior civil servant. The group is considering a new and ambitious purpose and a clear focus.
Veterans First Point (V1P)	V1P has been developed by Veterans for Veterans and is staffed by an alliance of clinicians and Veterans. The service provided is free at the point of access and provided as part of the NHS. V1P works in collaboration with a large range of both statutory and third sector providers to meet the needs of veterans 'whatever they may be.' There are currently six Veterans First Points in Scotland each providing a range of services that work to the same ethos.
Veterans Scotland (VS)	VS aim is to establish cooperation and coordination between Veterans Organisations in Scotland, to act as a focal point for all matters concerning the ex-Service community within Scotland and to represent these matters to Government at all levels.
Wraparound Childcare (WAC)	Wraparound childcare is also known as 'Out of School care' in Wales and 'School Aged Childcare' in Scotland. WAC is childcare that schools provide outside of normal school hours, such as breakfast clubs or after school.

2 Introduction

The challenge to the UK in terms of its investment in Service personnel transitioning in and out of the Armed Forces is a complex one. While some may remain in service until the age of 60, it is recognised that the majority will retire or move into civilian life beforehand. 'Transition is the term commonly used to describe the period of change around reintegration into civilian life from the Armed Forces" (Scottish Veterans Commissioner, 2020[7]). For those personnel leaving after a long-term career this transition becomes a crucial factor, not only for the country to retain high quality personnel and knowledge, but also to address the continuing need to recruit and train high quality personnel to serve in both regular and reserve roles, and to meet the countless defence needs this presents. For the country, and the Ministry of Defence (MOD), managing this changeover is important as it embodies a resource that can continue to give value or a burden that can incur both personal and societal costs. A key aspect of this process is that service people need to recognise the value they bring to society, and society needs to value that contribution in realistic and constructive ways both during and after service.

The Scottish Government has stated its aim to "make Scotland the most attractive destination for service leavers and their families, offering high living standards, great job prospects and a society that respects and values their contribution" (Scottish Veterans Commissioner, 2020). In civilian life people change jobs regularly and it is not unusual for families to move house, sometimes over considerable distances into new communities very different to the one they have left. Whether in terms of employment or living space these changes are generally completed with minimal support either from employers or communities. The Armed Forces pride themselves on being composed of highly competent, professional, confident individuals who are resourceful, adaptable, problem solvers. The question is therefore immediately created as to why transition should be regarded as such a significant issue of concern for this latter group in comparison to their civilian counterparts. This question is even more acute for Scotland where the Scots' national self-image is of a welcoming liberally minded country that is proud of the military, and where in theory, transition should be easier. These aspects are

[7] http://www.veteransscotland.co.uk/docs/Research/Scottish-Veterans-Commissioner-Positive-Futures-Employment-Skills-and-Learning-2020-Online-1.pdf

addressed in this study through a deeper comparison of life in the Armed Forces with that in the wider community when viewed through the lens of the service leaver and their partner.

The Armed Forces offer a working environment where the sense of unity and team spirit is highly unusual if not unique in the employment context. There is a feeling of shared purpose where a sense of mission is actively encouraged in every aspect of life from training courses, exercises, and the wider social life of military units. This has a positive expression – to defend the UK, or more locally "to protect my team, friends or family" – but it also has an active negative expression, with clearly identified threats or enemies. Against those values, other motivators such as "making a profit" or "delivering a better service" look pale.

The military also offers a binding spirit of excellence and organisational self-belief which contrasts sharply with the ethos of potential failure widely promoted in some parts of civilian life. These strands of contrast pejoratively unite in the higher features of the State most obviously in the ceremonies of Remembrance Day or Trooping the Colour but also in local air displays and open days which have no civilian equivalent. Reinforcing that sense of unity and excellence the military organise their people's lives in all aspects from how they spend their leisure time, what they eat, where they live and even how they walk (march) about their workplace. This loss of a tight, positive structure must be bewildering to a Service leaver, particularly for those with a long service history. They are entering a world which is altogether more open and uncertain and above all where personal choices must be made sometimes with minimum guidance, and advice may have to be self-researched. Even the work or wider values of the community of which they are now part may require sensitive exploration.

The veteran's population in Scotland is estimated to be in the region of 240,000 with an estimated additional 1,800 ex-Service personnel and their families planning to settle in Scotland annually. For the service leaver settling in Scotland these issues of contrast may be more extreme. Most obviously, in the military the allegiance is the UK state and government; the Scots population is much more divided on that matter. While the Scottish Government appears to extend a welcome to veterans and embraces the Covenant on all levels of its structure, there are features of life in Scotland, which may suggest otherwise. This paradox between policy and practice is clearly evident in several areas explored in this study.

2.1 Structure of the Report

This report is structured as follows:

Chapter 3 outlines the background and context for the study.

Chapter 4 briefly outlines the research framework in relation to qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Also discussed is the research design, how secondary data has been used, the sampling challenges, how the data were analysed using realist evaluation and by what means consistency and validity was achieved.

Chapter 5 discusses the quantitative findings in terms of Survey 1 (veterans who left in the last 10 years and their family), and Survey 2 (Service personnel in the process of transition or thinking of transition and their family).

Chapter 6 examines the findings from Key Stakeholders and captures the most significant changes to transition regarding education, health, and employment in Scotland. Also considered is the participant observation at the workshops with the Career Transition Partnership, Survey 3 (Employers perspective of veteran and the key areas where veterans were employed across Scotland) and FOI requests**.**

Chapter 7 explores the qualitative findings from in-depth interviews and focus groups and the five key themes that emerged from the realist evaluation. This chapter further reviews various 'deep dives' encompassing families, partners of Service personnel, commonwealth communities, veterans in custody, medical discharge, employment of partners and childcare facilities, as well as the Moray case study.

Chapter 8 presents discussion of the key findings, conclusion, recommendations for policy and practice as well as education and research. Also considered is the strengths and limitations of this study and implications for future research.

3 Study Background and Context

One of the first steps to recognising the issues surrounding effective planning for the transition and settlement of Armed Forces personnel in Scotland is to understand the dynamics of their presence in Scotland. This is related to the distribution of Armed Forces bases; the services involved, which has implications for the nature of the population served; and the likely changes in each main base area.

3.1 Current Landscape in Scotland

Scotland has a long military tradition, stretching back centuries to well before the formation of the British Army in the 18th Century, and continues to provide fertile recruiting ground for the UK's Armed Forces. Statistics from the MOD's Directorate of Talent, Skills, Learning and Development (TSLD) statistics indicated that in the last seven years 7113 individuals enlisted in the Armed Forces from Scotland. The earliest recorded date of enlistment from Scotland was 1968. Data from 1968-2022 showed that there were periodic peaks in enlistment from Scotland between the years 1995-2000 (936 individuals), followed by 2003-2021. The highest peak in enlistment appeared to be in 2015 (414, 5.82%). Those serving in Scotland will not be

uniquely Scottish, of course: personnel from all over the UK, and elsewhere, who volunteer to join the UK Armed Forces accept that one of the conditions of service is that they will serve wherever they are posted. Identifiably Scottish units, such as the Royal Regiment of Scotland, will generally include personnel from the rest of the UK and indeed Commonwealth countries. There are Scots serving in Scottish units, stations or ships based outside Scotland, or in RAF, Royal Navy, Royal Marines or Army units with no specific regional association, e.g., the Royal Logistics Corps or the RAF Regiment. All three Services post people in and out of Scotland, and send them to conduct training, or deploy on operations overseas, on a regular basis. Military life is therefore dynamic for most people serving: there is a continual rotation of personnel and families on any military base. This can build resilience and provide opportunities not always available in other careers; conversely, it can be disruptive and challenging for both individuals and families. At times of transition there is a need for stability, reassurance, support and encouragement from the MOD and the Services to enable individuals and their families to transition successfully.

The total size of full-time UK Armed Forces (trained and untrained) was 196,240 as of 1st April 2022, with 10,120 (approx. 5.2%) stationed in Scotland[8]. Military forces are based in Scotland as part of the UK's wider defence; it is currently home to 5.1% of the British Army. This will grow to 5.5% (3,984 SP) under the Integrated Review Future Soldier implementation plan, compared with 19.6% of the Royal Navy and 8.4% of the RAF[9]. For comparison, the Scottish population comprises 8.15% of the total UK population[10]. In 2016 across the UK, it was estimated that there were approximately 2.5 million UK Armed Forces veterans residing in Great Britain. By 2028, this is forecast to decrease year-on-year to 1.6 million, of which 44% will be of working age[11]. In Scotland in 2019 there were an estimated 240,000 UK Armed Forces veterans, and it is expected that an additional 1,800 ex-Service personnel and their

[8] Harding, M. and Dempsey, N., UK Defence Personnel Statistics, 2021. *Houses of Common Library, UK Parliament.* Retrieved from: CBP-7930.pdf (parliament.uk)

[9] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy

[10] ONS April 2021

[11] MoD, 2019. Population Projections: UK Armed Forces Veterans residing in Great Britain, 2016 to 2028. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/population-projections-uk-armed-forces-veterans-residing-in-great-britain-2016-to-2028

families settle in Scotland annually[12]. It is estimated that 129,000 (58%) of the veterans residing in Scotland are aged 65 and over[13]. However, the balance is likely to change significantly in the coming decade, resulting in a younger age profile in the veteran community, with potentially different needs. This is a population that is arguably more mobile than many parts of the populace.

The distribution of veterans across Scotland is a response to several factors. As with reservists, they may not be obviously visible in any given community and may not wish to declare their status. In our study we were able to use findings from our questionnaire and TSLD data to map some of our veterans. However, we acknowledge that a more accurate account will not be available until we have the outcomes of the Scottish census in 2024.

The Strategy for our Veterans[14], published jointly between the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations, including the Scottish Government, introduced as its vision: "*those*

[12] Scottish Veterans Commissioner Report (2019) Positive Future: Getting Transition Right in Scotland. https://scottishveteranscommissioner.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Positive-Futures-SVC-2019-ONLINE.pdf

[13] Support for veterans: strategy (2020): https://www.gov.scot/publications/strategy-veterans-taking-strategy-forward-scotland/pages/4/

[14] strategy-veterans-taking-strategy-forward-scotland.pdf

who have served in the UK Armed Forces, and their families, transition smoothly back into civilian life and contribute fully to a society that understands and values what they have done and what they have to offer." The 2019 report from the Scottish Veterans Commissioner (Positive Futures, 2019[15]) noted, however, that transition is an area which still provides significant challenge for service leavers.

3.2 The Armed Forces across Scotland

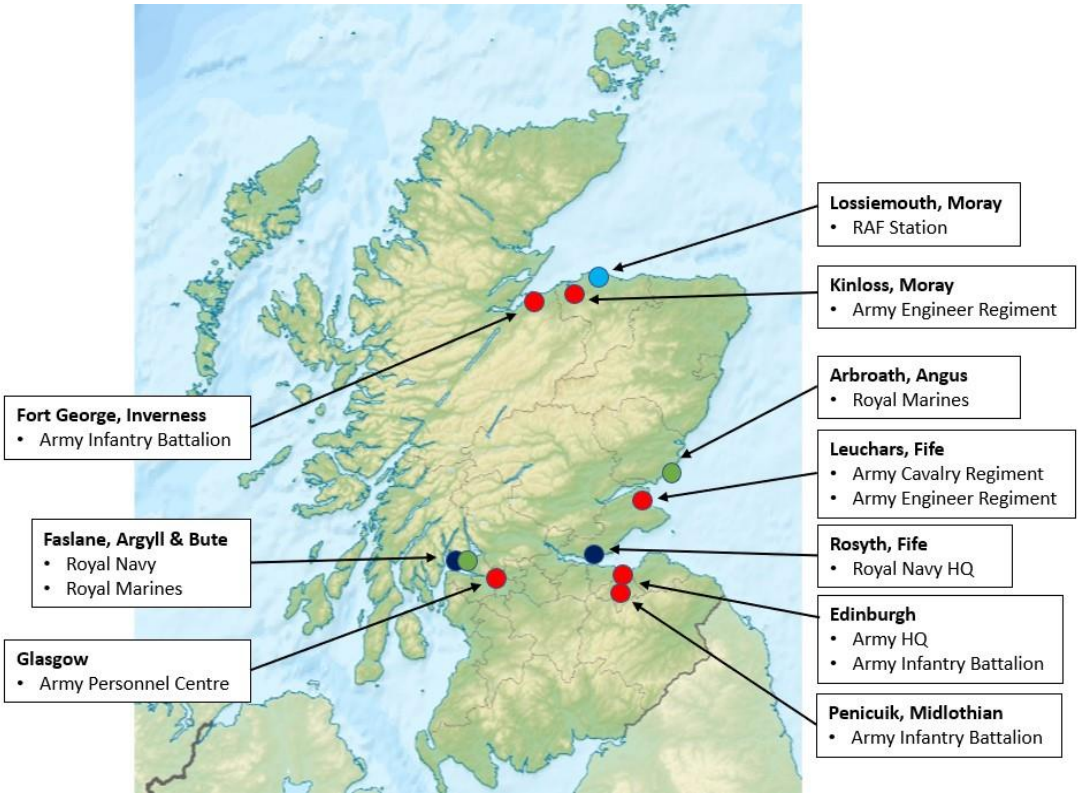

Figure 1: Distribution of Main Military Bases in Scotland (2022)

Scotland has several large military bases, shown above in Fig 1, where most of the uniformed personnel work. There are also many smaller bases, including Reserve Centres, all around Scotland, often of 'minor unit' strength; typically, around 100 personnel. Reserve Centres generally include a small staff of regular Service personnel (leaders, instructors, or administrative staff), to support the contingent of reservists. The Reserves are seen as central to the UK's defence, and reservists themselves are integrated frequently into regular forces'

[15] https://scottishveteranscommissioner.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Positive-Futures-SVC-2019-ONLINE.pdf

training and deployments. In recent years there has been a much greater effort to integrate regular and reserve forces – indeed, many reservists are ex-regulars who have decided to maintain their links with the military after leaving regular military service – with new MOD policies that refer to the 'Whole Force', and reservists increasingly playing a part in Defence activity. This integration has been particularly evident during the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, with regular and reserve Service personnel frequently deploying side by side on resilience operations to support the emergency services, for example by driving ambulances or providing mobile testing units and teams of vaccinators.

Although reservists are not entitled to Service Family Accommodation, and their families are therefore not fully integrated into Service life in the same way that a regular Service person's family tends to be (a reservist's family is not posted from one country to another, for example), the needs of Reservist Families are at times very similar to those of regular Service families. A good example might be the mobilisation of a reservist for a long period, e.g., a six-month operational tour overseas, which brings with it all the attendant challenges, risks, uncertainty, and family separation faced by their regular counterparts. There has been renewed focus on the needs of reservists and their families in recent years, and their existence outside the 'behind the wire' military community is increasingly recognised by local authorities, such as Highland Council, which has incorporated the needs of reservists and their families into their annual strategy[16].

3.3 MOD Operations in Scotland

The UK and Scottish Governments agree that Scotland plays a crucial role in the defence of the UK, and Scotland's contribution to the deterrence and defence capability of NATO is assessed as considerable by the UK government[17]. This is reflected in MOD spending on the defence industry in Scotland, which constituted 9.7% of the MOD's total UK spending in 2021/22 (almost £2 billion)[18]. HMNB Clyde and RAF Lossiemouth in Scotland are particularly

[16] https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/886/schools_-_additional_support_needs/833/armed_forces_-_support_for_families_and_schools/2

[17] House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee report: Defence in Scotland – military landscape https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/22776/documents/167362/default/ June 2022

[18] House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee report: Defence in Scotland – military landscape https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/22776/documents/167362/default/ June 2022

important to the MOD's strategic basing and will receive significant investment over the next few years.

The strength and disposition of the Armed Forces are subject to periodic review by the UK Government and the paragraphs below outline significant financial investment for the Royal Navy and RAF in Scotland. The latest restructuring of the Army also includes some changes for Scotland[19]. There will be a new role for the Army's headquarters in Scotland, a slight increase in Army regiments based in Scotland, from six to seven, and several internal moves, new equipment and a £355m investment in the Army estate. Although a few MOD bases remain on the disposal list, the future for Defence in Scotland is therefore relatively positive and stable, with an increase in numbers based in Scotland for all three Services.

[19] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-soldier-transforming-the-british-army

HMNB Clyde (also known as Faslane) houses the UK's nuclear deterrent, the Royal Navy's main presence in Scotland, and has recently become home to the UK's entire submarine service. It employs nearly 7,000 civilian and military personnel and is the second largest single site employer in Scotland. The 4,800 military personnel represent nearly 40% of the total regular forces in Scotland; numbers are due to almost double, to 8,200 over the next decade.

The MOD is investing £1.6 billion in improvements at HMNB Clyde over a 10-year period[20]. RAF Lossiemouth is the RAF's main operating base in Scotland and its location in the north of Scotland covers the northern arc of UK airspace and protects the country and NATO airspace from attempted air terrorism and other incursions. Aircraft and crews are kept at high readiness to scramble and intercept unidentified aircraft approaching UK airspace from any direction. RAF Lossiemouth is home to four Typhoon combat aircraft squadrons, two Poseidon Maritime Patrol squadrons and an RAF Regiment squadron; new early warning radar aircraft will arrive in 2023. RAF Lossiemouth is home to 2,500 personnel (regulars, reservists, civil servants, and contractors). £470m has been committed to infrastructure improvements, which will lead to an extra 550 Service personnel and their families moving to the base.

[20] Integrated Review 2023: https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9750/

These increases do not necessarily signal an increase in the number of Service personnel who will choose to transition and settle in Scotland, but they do indicate that representation within Scotland will see significant change, in terms of service background, education and likely skill levels, which in turn may affect future needs in terms of employment, housing, health, social care and support services.

3.4 Current Data

It is widely acknowledged that significant improvements could be made to the availability and use of data regarding veterans in Scotland. The Scottish Government's Refreshed Action Plan for the Veterans Strategy outlines five proposals to improve the current situation, including encouraging veterans to declare their veteran status when seeking a service or support, working with National Records of Scotland to develop outputs from the 2022 Census in Scotland, and exploring data-sharing opportunities with the UK Government to exploit data and identity gaps. These aspirations date back to the publication of the original strategy in 2018; however there has been little progress in data sharing since then. The inclusion of a census question on military service, long overdue, now offers some potential to deliver on the declared Veterans Strategy outcome of 'building an evidence base to effectively identify and address the needs of veterans'[21].

The decoupling of the census in Scotland from the rest of the UK by a year (2022 rather than 2021) will delay some of this potential collaboration, however when the data does become available it should offer a rich source of information on the number and place veterans are living in Scotland. However, outcome of this study will demonstrate that despite the outcomes of the Scottish Census we are still some distance from detailed records of our veteran's population in terms of health, employment, education, (specifically those of Armed Forces children) and housing. Much of this rests on the voluntary nature of current data collection processes and the lack of uniform data collection tools which would allow for planning and comparison. An example of this problem is evident in the TSLD 2015-2022 data provided below in Table 1 related to the number of veterans who declared that they intended

[21] House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee report: Defence in Scotland – military landscape https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/22776/documents/167362/default/ June 2022

to settle in Scotland between the dates of 2015-2022. There is currently no follow up mechanism in place to check if these figures are accurate.

Clients Rank & Service					
Service	**Junior Rank**	**Senior Rank**	**Officer**	**Senior Officer**	**Grand Total**
Army	3047	718	299	31	4095
RAF	743	359	150	12	1264
Royal Marines	379	58	9	2	448
Royal Navy	872	271	143	20	1306
Grand Total	**5041 (71%)**	**1406 (20%)**	**601 (8%)**	**65 (1%)**	**7113**

Table 1: Rank & Service Leavers (TSLD 2015-2022)

The table highlights the ranks of Service leavers from the three services. While a greater proportion of the respondents were from Junior Ranks (71%), there are also those of a higher rank with those in Senior Rank (20%), and Officers (8%). Senior officers accounted for the lowest proportion (1%). The group comprised 6555 males, 554 females, and 4 using the title of Doctor[22].

Nonetheless, it is encouraging to see interest in Scotland from the recently established UK Government Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) in their Veterans Strategy Action Plan[23]. One of their commitments, with a target date of end 2022, is to share Service Leavers' Data (SLD) with the Scottish Government to support their evidence base on veterans living in Scotland. This will potentially allow links to other datasets, including the Scottish census, and analysis of the de-identified, linked data. Use of the SLD will be restricted, and the MOD will retain final decision-making control over how the data is used, however it is hoped that this data can be shared more widely, to allow wider research, thereby helping to achieve some of the aims in the Veterans Strategy.

[22] CTP do not collect gender, so title has been used to determine: Male - clients with title Sir/Mr; Female - clients with title Ms/Miss/Mrs; Dr - clients with title Dr - gender unable to be identified.
[23] Veterans' Strategy Action Plan: 2022 to 2024 (HTML) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Figure 2: SVC Susie Hamilton in Edinburgh with Veterans Commissioner for Northern Ireland Danny Kinahan, Veterans Commissioner for Wales James Phillips, and Independent Veterans Advisor to the UK Government David Richmond

3.5 Resettlement and Transition Policy Developments

The MOD provides guidance to Service personnel on important matters (e.g., legal issues, Health & Safety, personnel management, welfare, education etc.) through Joint Service Publications (JSPs). The JSP for resettlement, JSP 534[24], explains that Service Leavers (SL) fall into one of the following mutually exclusive categories and definitions:

- Normal Discharge SL. Normal discharge SL are those discharged either on completion of their engagement, having submitted their notice to leave, having been given notice of discharge (either redundancy or compulsory).
- Medical Discharge SL. All SL regardless of length of service who are being discharged for medical reasons.

[24] JSP 534 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tri-service-resettlement-manual-jsp-534

- Early Service Leavers (ESLs) are defined as SL who are discharged voluntarily or compulsorily, having completed less than 4 years' service.

The latest Service Leavers' Guide[25], available to all Service personnel, explains that everyone serving is responsible for their own resettlement and for engaging with their Service Resettlement Adviser (SRA) – there is one available to every military organisation. It further explains that all personnel are entitled to resettlement support, consisting of time, financial support, training/upskilling, and career advice. There are 3 levels of resettlement support:

- Unit resettlement information staff, who offer initial advice on entitlement (what is available) and the process to access that support;
- The SRA, who gives more detailed advice and guidance on the resettlement package that is available and will best suit the individual;
- The Career Transition Partnership (CTP), a partnership agreement between the MOD and Right Management Ltd, which runs resettlement training, including skills courses.

The current resettlement contract was awarded and implemented under the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) with effect from 1 Oct 2015 (it is due to be re-let in 2023), and offers support for all Regular Service personnel, regardless of time served or reason for leaving. Different programmes are offered depending upon time served and other factors:

a. The Core Resettlement Programme (CRP) is available to those who have served more than six years and all medical discharges (regardless of time served).
b. The Employment Support Programme (ESP) is available to those who have served between four and six years.
c. The CTP Future Horizons is available to Early Service Leavers (ESL), i.e., those who leave before the four-year point.
d. Specialist Support Programme – the Specialist Support Programme (SSP) is responsible for delivering the CTP Assist resettlement pathway to support wounded, injured, and sick personnel to achieve a sustainable and fulfilling career, regardless of time served.

[25] Service Leavers Guide https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/928535/SLG_Oct_Edition_FINAL.pdf

Data made available from CTP highlights that 87.08% of transitioning personnel engaged with CTP over the last seven years. We know that 9.53% did not engage; however, in 3.37% of cases, Service leaver's information was not passed onto CTP.

MOD policy explains the responsibilities of the chain of command for providing support and advice to Service leavers, at various levels, e.g., Individual Education and Resettlement Officers, Education Officers, Regional Resettlement Officers etc. Inevitably, given the wide variety of situations that Service life demands, (for example someone serving in a training establishment in the UK vs. someone deployed overseas on an operational tour) the support available to Service personnel in the process of preparing to leave Service has the potential also to be variable. Not all Service leavers choose to attend resettlement courses provided by the MOD; some may already have received an offer of employment before they leave, others may wish to take a break or go travelling, while some may embark upon a period of training or academic pursuit.

The most important change to MOD policy for Service leavers in recent years is the introduction of JSP 100, the Holistic Transition Policy (MOD, 2019[26]). It is significant because for the first time it brings together under a single policy guidance on employment, health and wellbeing, welfare, housing advice, financial information, and advice to the chain of command on how leaders should support Service personnel and their families through career and at end of Service. It is too early at this stage to say how well it is being implemented – and a new, simplified version is currently being written – but the fact that the MOD acknowledges the need to improve the current level of support for Service leavers, and is putting in place improved systems, is a positive development. In the current study key stakeholders were aware of this new policy, knowledge was less evident among Service personnel and veterans.

3.6 Summary

Review of both grey and academic literature allowed us to provide a detailed background to the context in which the current study was conducted. It is evident this is a complex and

[26] JSP100_Parts1And2__V1.1_Apr_21_.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)

dynamic environment in Scotland experiencing cycles of major changes in its geography and policy. Our Interim Report[27] addressed the systematic literature review covering concepts, characteristics, commonalities, consequences, and contexts of military transitions allowed us to frame our operational and academic underpinning. This stage of the study also allowed us to consider the research gaps, potential research questions to be posed and the research approaches most suitable for the investigation. A more detailed account of the methodology is provided in the next section, Chapter 4.

[27] The literature review in our Interim Report can be accessed via: https://www.napier.ac.uk/-/media/youre-in-your-own-time-now--interim-report.ashx

4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The overall purpose of this study was to provide an evidence base that would influence and underpin policymaking and service delivery, to enable ex-Service personnel and their families to lead successful civilian lives. This research adopted a mixed methods approach drawing on both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. This approach maximised the potential to understand experiences of resettlement/transition from military to civilian life in Scotland.

4.2 Objectives

This study explored four objectives, which related to enhancing the evidence base around transition in Scotland and using this evidence to enable improvements in policy and practice. These objectives strongly align with the stated mission and vision of FiMT: "*to enable ex-Service personnel and their families to make a successful and sustainable transition to civilian life*". They included:

- An in-depth understanding of the UK research landscape relating to Service leavers, including gaps in the extant evidence base, generated through a detailed literature review;
- A substantive improvement in the understanding of a range of key demographic factors for Service leavers/veterans settling in Scotland, generated through quantitative analysis of data through an online survey;
- An understanding of the concerns and aspirations of Service leavers and their families settling in Scotland and their support needs, generated through qualitative interviews with service leavers/veterans;
- Empowering decision-makers to make improvements in policy and service provision based on the resulting evidence and recommendations.

This research engaged with many key stakeholders within Scotland who provide services and support mechanisms for Armed Forces personnel, veterans, and their families. From an

Armed Forces perspective, the key bodies involved in the transition process include the MOD Directorate for Talent, Skills, Learning and Development (TSLD, formerly TESRR), the Career Transition Partnership (CTP), the Military Education Centres and the Resettlement Officers at unit level. Outside the military, we engaged with the Office of the Scottish Veterans Commissioner, Veterans Scotland, and many other organisations within the Third Sector, NHS Scotland, and the local authorities. Other groups approached who provide support to service leavers and families include the Armed Forces Families' Federations, and organisations such as Department of Work and Pensions, Skills Development Scotland, and the Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations.

4.3 Advisory Board

In planning the study, the team chose to convene an Advisory Board, established by invitation and including key influencers from various stakeholder organizations. The Board was invited to meet quarterly to provide oversight, help steer and guide the project, and collaborate with researchers to ensure outcomes deliver maximum impact. The Board had no specific remit to deliver governance for the project; however, it was requested to provide assurance to stakeholders, for example that the project was being appropriately managed and that risks were being identified and mitigated.

4.4 Research approaches

For a more detailed account of our research approach including our literature review please refer to our interim report[28]. Our literature review employed a systematic review approach. This allowed us to generate a clear, comprehensive overview of the existing available evidence and of the status quo, using the following five steps (Khan et al., 2003[29]):

- Framing questions for review
- Identifying relevant work
- Assessing the quality of material
- Summarising the evidence

[28] The literature review in our Interim Report can be accessed via: https://www.napier.ac.uk/-/media/youre-in-your-own-time-now--interim-report.ashx

[29] Khan, K. S., Kunz, R., Kleijnen, J., & Antes, G. (2003). Five steps to conducting a systematic review. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, *96*(3), 118–121. https://doi.org/10.1177/014107680309600304

- Interpreting the findings

The review was then used as a theoretical underpinning on which to frame the concepts – both academic and operational – surrounding the transition landscape in Scotland. This is a complex environment, and the challenges of conducting such evaluation are well-documented. We know transition into civilian life occurs in a variety of contexts and involves different stakeholders (e.g., NHS, Skills Development Scotland, Tri-services Families Federations, TSLD, etc.). Further, we recognised that just as there is no common definition of 'transition', there is no typical experience of it among Service leavers.

The factors that influence these experiences are similarly complex and dynamic, although many of the factors themselves appear to be common across different settings. Fig 3 below illustrates our literature-based methodological framework.

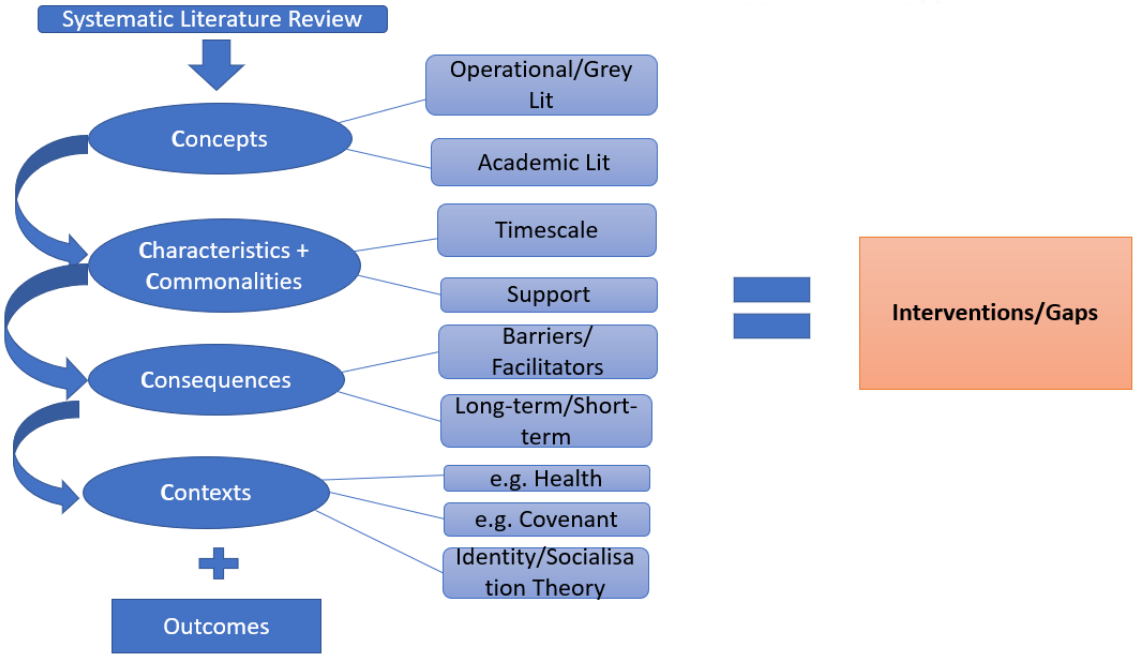

Figure 3: Literature-based Methodological Framework

We framed our concepts and identified that these were expressed variously according to context, even if at this point, we did not yet fully understand how. We understood from the literature that there are commonalities across the transition landscape which influence service leavers' experiences, and that the characteristics of such experiences (such as

timescale, type, and frequency of support etc.) can be both barriers and facilitators to achieving the desired outcome. What works in one context, in theory, may not work in another. By focusing only on the literature, however, we risked missing out on potentially valuable information which could allow us to understand the situation more fully. Consequently, it was important to gather primary data to understand what works, for whom, and under what circumstances.

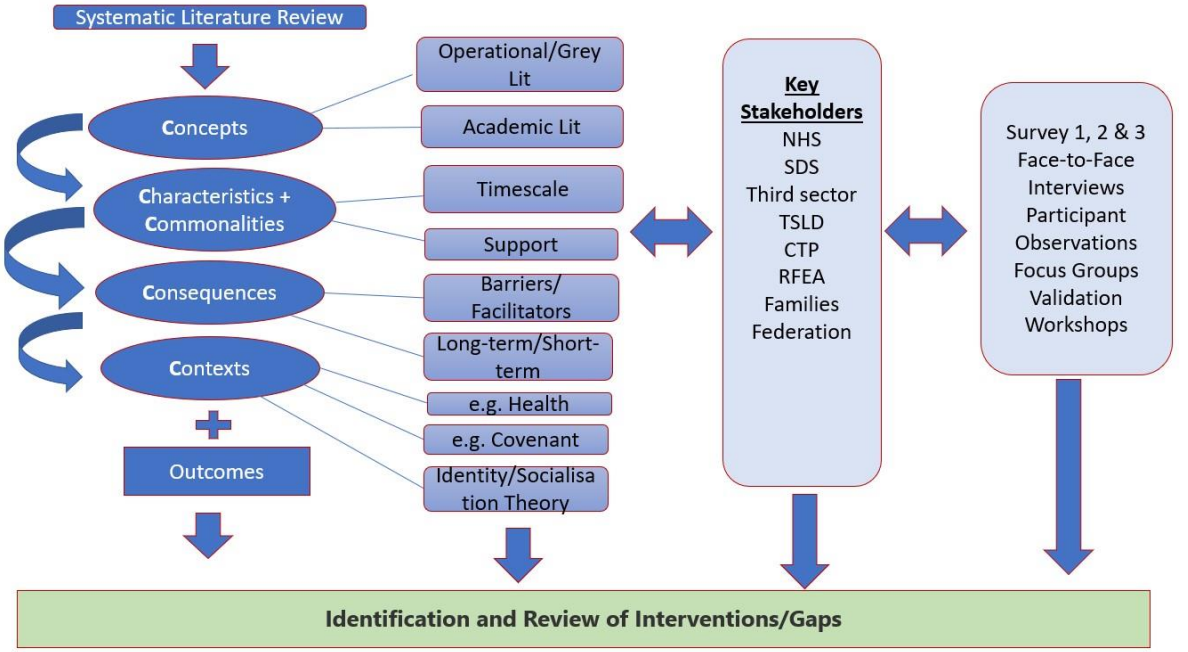

Figure 4: Data Collection Techniques

We recognised that our study outcomes would only be achieved through a series of data collection techniques which together would provide us with a detailed picture of the current transition process in Scotland from the perspective of key stakeholders, active staff in the process of transition, veterans, spouse, and partners. Fig 4 above illustrates how we moved from literature review to sampling and ultimately data collection techniques. Data were collected sequentially with each set building on the last and offering a more detailed perspective.

4.5 First-stage data collection

4.5.1 Questionnaires and stakeholder interviews

To enhance our demographic mapping, and once we had been granted MODREC approval, we conducted three online surveys. The first two targeted Service personnel, veterans, and their families. Online survey 1 and 2 were created to replace the large data set on Service leavers which was proving difficult to access. These surveys were designed to explore a range of key demographic factors for service leavers/ veterans settling in Scotland, such as distribution across local authorities. The outcomes of Survey 1 and 2 formed the basis for the realist interview agendas conducted in Stage 2 and facilitated the access of a sample for interviews with both groups. An employer survey was also conducted to investigate the employment trends and desired skills of veterans in Scottish companies with/without recognised Covenant status.

Alongside this, we engaged with key stakeholder who provide support to Service leavers and veterans in Scotland through 34 in-depth interviews, to help us to establish their understanding of what the experience of military transition in Scotland should be. Interviews were recorded with permission from the participants and transcribed verbatim. Because these interviews related to what military transition looks like in theory, as distinct from lived experience, it was decided to use these as a baseline comparator for the data collected from veterans and Service personnel, rather than as part of the realist evaluation. The interviews were therefore analysed thematically and are presented in Chapter 6.

4.5.2 Realist Evaluation

Realist evaluation is based on the notion that the same intervention will not work everywhere or indeed for everyone. Non observable entities or practices including culture, class or economic systems can have a tangible effect on how or if programmes work. This approach is especially useful for evaluating programmes that produce mixed outcomes to better understand how and why differential outcomes occur. The purpose of realist evaluation is to identify, articulate, test, and refine hypotheses related to combinations of the three concepts context, mechanism, and outcome (C-M-O), rather than determining outcomes in particular contexts. Bundling these CMOs together gives us a more nuanced understanding of how

mechanisms act to produce positive or negative outcomes. Programme theories distinguish how programme activities produce outcomes and can be informed by a variety of sources such as published evidence, case studies and formal theories from specific fields. These 'programme theories' can be expressed in terms of *context-mechanism-outcome* (**CMO**), where a particular outcome (**O**) happens due to the action of a mechanism (**M**) in a certain context (**C**). It is worth noting that the CMO approach is not necessarily a linear one, even though it is ultimately expressed as such; interventions may work in more than one way in a particular context, or the same mechanism at work in a different context might produce a different outcome. These 'interventions' themselves do not produce outcomes; rather, it is the *mechanisms* by which they work. Recognising that realist approaches were appropriate in the evaluation of complex situations we chose to use this approach to examine the multifaceted nature of transition from the perspective of those who had experience of that process.

Key areas identified in this section of the study were selected for a series of 'deep dives'. Data were collected in several of the formats outlined above. However, at various points throughout the study, we had the opportunity to be participant observers on military bases, Welfare Centres, and nurseries and at CTP Workshops. These opportunities allowed us to both experience and to collect data on how specific services were functioning. The insights gained on these occasions allowed for a deeper understanding of how engagement occurred in different groups.

4.5.3 Secondary data

In addition to the material considered in the literature review, secondary data were collected from a variety of sources: TSLD (Talent, Skills, Learning & Development) Seven-year data set on service leavers settling in Scotland; Scottish Prison Services data; FOI requests were sent to uniformed services to establish numbers of veterans employed in Scotland; Moray case study (see Chapter 7, Section 7.6.1). Use of this 'grey literature' allowed us to triangulate data from multiple sources and enhanced the validity of our findings.

4.6 Sample

Purposive sampling was used to identify key stakeholders related to the Armed Forces services, the NHS and the Third Sector including (but not limited to): Service HQ transition officers, Veterans Scotland, the Scottish Veterans Commissioner, CTP, Skills Development Scotland, Defence Transition Service, NHS Scotland, Housing Scotland, the Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP) and Veterans First Point. Capturing these lived experiences was in line with future comments made by the Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans in the Strategy for Veterans in Scotland Report (Scottish Government, 2020).

Our study was focused on younger veterans and so our sample were drawn from veterans who had left the Armed Forces within the last 10 years; Service personnel who were in the process of transitioning; spouses and partners of both groups across the Tri-services; service members of the Commonwealth and their partners. Our exclusion criteria included individuals below the age of 18, children, veterans who may be deemed vulnerable and/or have declared a Mental Health condition.

4.6.1 Sampling Challenges

As noted in our interim report, we faced considerable difficulty in accessing Service personnel to complete our initial questionnaire. Despite the support offered by many of our partners and the inclusion of an e-voucher incentive, this remained problematic. We recognised that attending in person produced a much better outcome, so we employed this practice following the relaxation of Covid restrictions. We carried out face-to-face participant observation and survey data collection in CTP workshops across Scotland. Consequently, the response rate increased from 10 Service personnel to over 100. Furthermore, we attended the two CTP Employment Fairs, one centrally in Edinburgh and another in Kinloss, resulting in an increase in our employer survey from 30 to 51 responses. This also allowed us greater understanding of the services offered by CTP.

We accessed Service personnel in the process of transition and family members (specifically spouses/partners) across Army and RAF bases by hosting coffee mornings and pizza evenings to discuss with them their unique needs. Unfortunately, this was not possible with the Royal Navy. However, efforts were made by them to allow us access to their CTP workshops through a Zoom session. Despite numerous attempts on our part to engage with various LGBT+ groups

it has not been possible to acquire a sample for these groups. We recognise that sampling methods must be adapted to suit certain specific groups within our sampling frame and employed a 'best practice' approach informed by the literature and the team's expertise. Although anonymity and confidentiality were ensured for all participants, we understand that there may be reticence even in making identity known to the researchers, for example if discussing mental health issues, gender identity, or if they fear reprisal for criticising leadership.

The realist evaluation and feedback from the Advisory Board prompted us to seek a more diverse review. In response we have engaged with female veterans, medically discharged groups, the Fijian community including Service personnel veterans and families. We also engaged with Scottish prisons to interview veterans who were prison officers and those who were inmates. We have conducted individual interviews and focus groups, including one focus group with veterans in custody. The prison service provided us with up-to-date numbers on veterans in custody in Scotland, which at the time of writing is the highest in the UK.

4.7 Second Stage Data Collection: Qualitative Data

With approval from MODREC, we were able to access data on Service leavers settling in Scotland in recent years, including their service history, where they settled - which will help understanding of the distribution of veterans across local authority areas - and their employment status after resettlement.

Consequently, interviews and focus groups were conducted across Scotland as follows:

- **Interviews** (veterans, Service personnel and stakeholders): 104
- **Focus Groups** (ranging from 3-10 individuals with Serving personnel, spouses of Serving personnel, Scottish Prison Services, Veterans in custody) 9
- **Participant Observations**: (Personnel attending CTP and families) 12

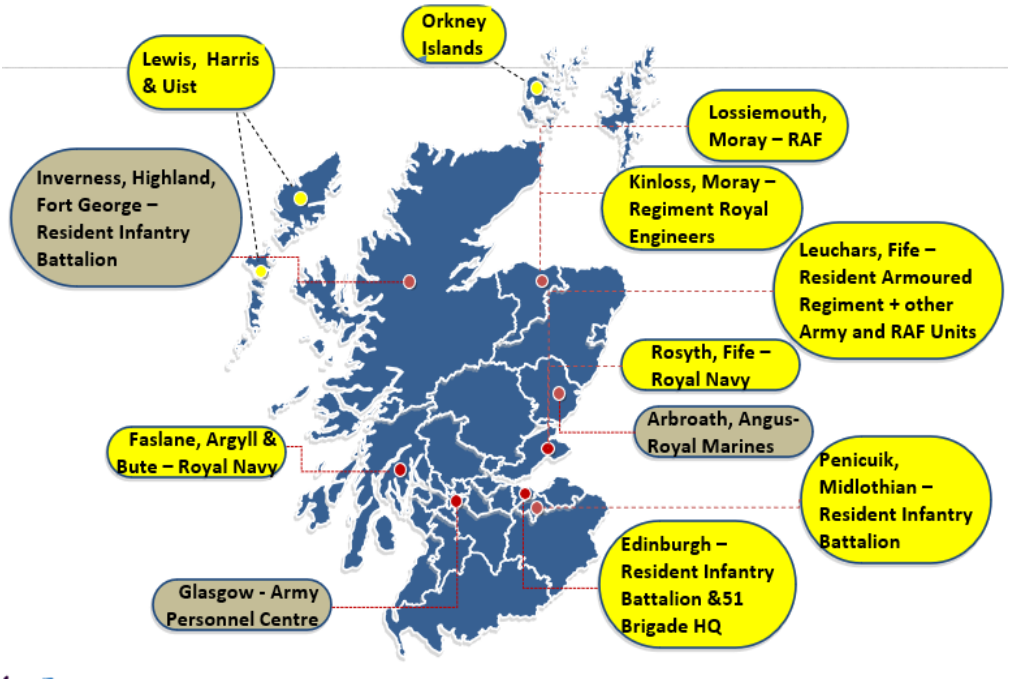

Figure 5: Distribution of Data Collection across Scotland

Fig 5 above shows the distribution of data collected across Scotland. Areas in yellow indicate where qualitative data were collected; areas in brown indicate military bases where data were not collected.

4.8 Data Analysis

Each of the nine data sets were analysed individually. All three surveys were analysed using descriptive statistics, focus groups, individual interviews and validation workshops were transcribed and coded individually. For veteran and Service personnel data we adopted a realist evaluation. Field notes from participant observation, data from the validation workshops and key stakeholder data were all transcribed and analysed thematically.

4.8.1 Coding and Pattern Matching

The research team conducted the realist evaluation using three steps.

Firstly, a coding framework was iteratively developed initially by looking at the themes derived from the literature review, and subsequently by reading a sample of early interview transcripts and developing a set of codes through discussion and negotiation. The efficacy and robustness of the coding framework was then tested by researchers, applying the codes to a sample of interview transcripts both independently and together.

Step 1 (coding): The coding framework was applied to sections of text from the interview transcripts. This was carried out by the two researchers who conducted the interviews, who were therefore the most familiar with the material. ***Step 2*** (pattern-matching): We then interrogated our coding to look for patterns in the data, by identifying these applied codes as 'context', 'mechanism' or 'outcome', and connecting C-M-O configurations both within and across transcripts. To minimise researcher bias, this was initially carried out by the researcher who was not involved in the interview process. At several points throughout this process initial findings were discussed with the whole team to ensure that key aspects in the data were being identified. ***Step 3*** (re-contextualising): We contrasted our CMO findings with our initial programme theories, putting them back into context of the transition landscape and comparing them with existing models. In this way, our initial programme theories could be tested and refined.

4.8.2 Data Consistency and Validation

Comparing CMO configurations both within the primary data and with the secondary data allowed us to check the consistency and quality of the data we collected. The validity of our findings was addressed in several ways:

- By using multiple sources of evidence (data triangulation);
- By pattern-matching (relating different pieces of information from the study to the surrounding literature);
- By employing theory in the study design and by testing our empirical findings against theory;
- By testing our initial findings against stakeholder expectations/experiences.

The latter test was carried out by organising a series of four stakeholder validation workshops, during which we shared our findings with diverse groups of stakeholders (some of whom had been involved in the initial baseline interviews) and sought feedback on both our sampling and our initial findings.

4.9 Summary

In this chapter the process of conducting the study has been explained. Using a mixed method approach allowed for a more detailed account to be developed. The sequential nature of the data collection allowed for some key emerging themes to be examined in more detail. The next chapter presents the results from Survey 1 and 2.

5 Quantitative Findings

In this chapter we present the findings from two surveys, one distributed to veterans who left the armed forces within the last 10 years, their partners/spouses, and the second Service personnel (both thinking about transition and in the process of transition), as well as families and significant others. The questionnaires were designed to collect demographic information, albeit there were sections where an explanation for the response to the question was sought. In the event we were pleasantly surprised by the amount of qualitative data that was evident in the surveys and by the number of people willing to take part in the stage two interviews. Both surveys asked 60 questions, and consent was acquired before commencement of the questionnaire and were clearly visible at the start of the questionnaire which followed MODREC guidance and format. Section 5.1 presents the responses from the Survey 1 which included Veterans and their partners/spouses providing a socio-demographic profile of the veterans, addresses their attributes, background characteristics and the type (and longevity) of their service within the Armed Forces.

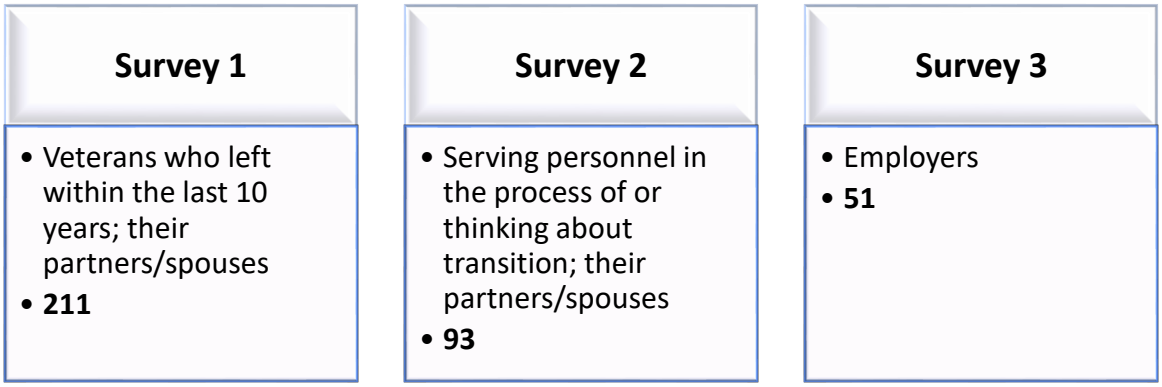

Figure 6: Quantitative Data Response Rate

The total number of cases available for analysis in Survey 1 (N=207), with (N=4) declining consent. Section 5.3 includes data from Service personnel as well as families and significant others. The total number of cases available for analysis in Survey 2 (N=93), with (N=7) incomplete. Section 6.4 addresses the outcomes of Survey 3.

5.1 Survey 1: Profile of Veterans

This section examines the profile of the Veterans who participated in the online survey. Respondents expressed several reasons for joining the Forces, ranging from family heritage/tradition; seeking adventure, job, and travel opportunities; to escape their hometown; to break away from the crime and deprivation surrounding them; career development opportunities after leaving school; and desire to fight and defend the country.

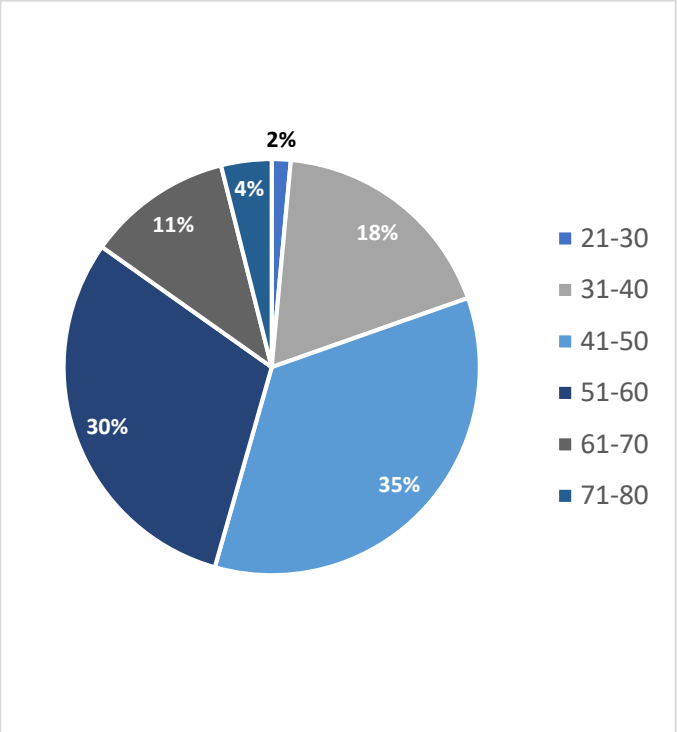

Figure 7: Age Range of Veterans

A plurality of respondents as can been seen in Fig 7 above, from the 41–50-year age group (35%) and the average age of the sample is 50. A significant proportion of the sample is also from the 51–60-year age group (30%), followed by those from the 31–40-year age group (18%).

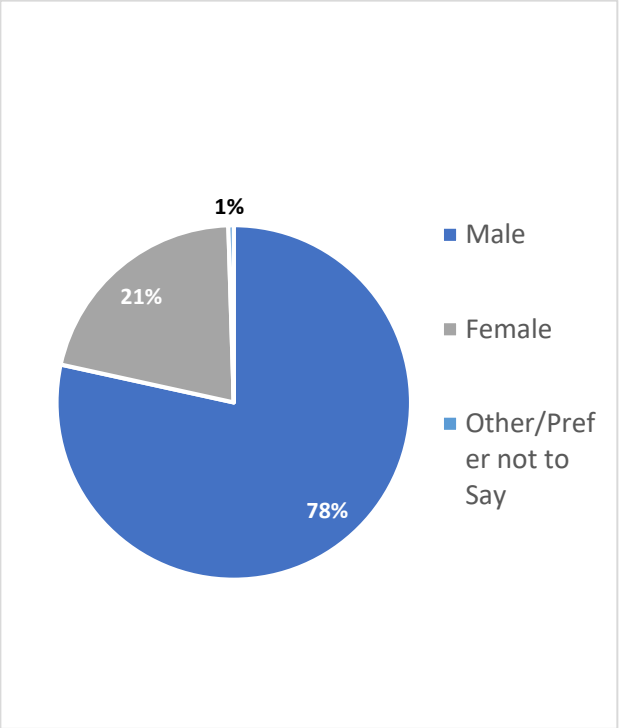

Figure 8: Gender of Veterans

The sample is male dominated with as evident in Fig 8 above with 78% male and 21%[30] female. Responses from female respondents increased from 17% to 21% since our first interim report in Nov. 2021. We used several online networks to increase female veteran participation in our study.

[30] Figures rounded.

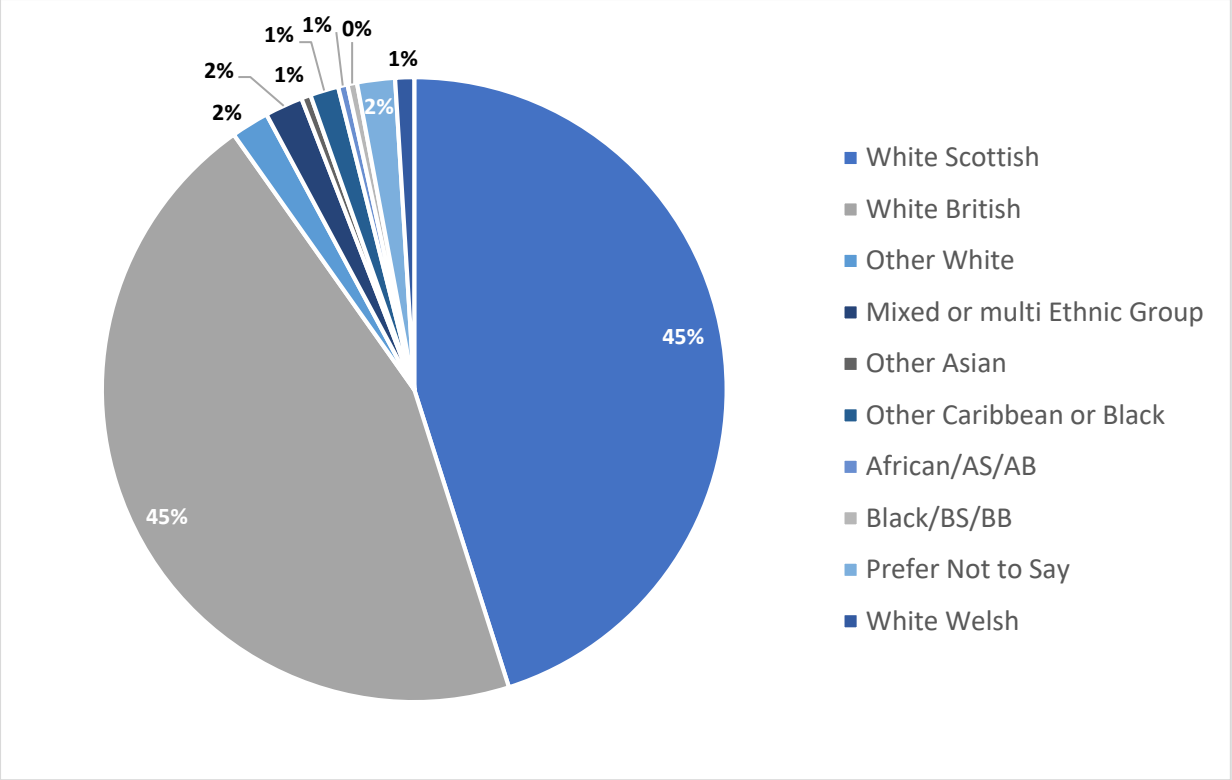

Figure 9: Ethnicity of Veterans

Fig 9 demonstrates that the sample predominantly self-identified as White Scottish (45%) and White British (45%). A very small number of participants identified as Other White (3%), and there were significantly limited number of respondents who self-identified as White Welsh (1%) and well as from Mixed or multi-ethnic Groups/Other Caribbean or Black minority ethnic groups (2%).

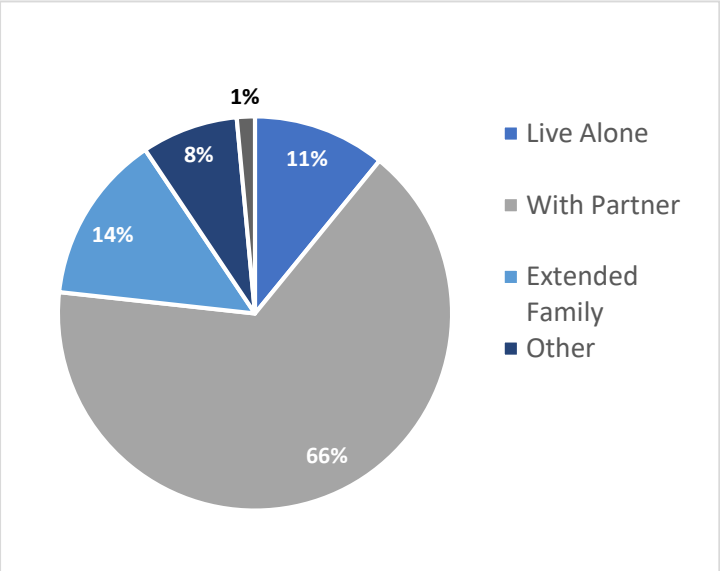

Figure 10: Living Arrangements of Veterans

A significant proportion of the respondents lived with their partner (66%), followed by those who lived with extended family (e.g., son, daughter, parents etc.) (14%), as can be seen in Fig 10. The remaining respondents lived alone (11%). There were also respondents that indicated that they resided in alternative accommodation (8%) for instance,

in rental accommodation or identified as being a homeowner; and finally, 1% preferred not to say[31].

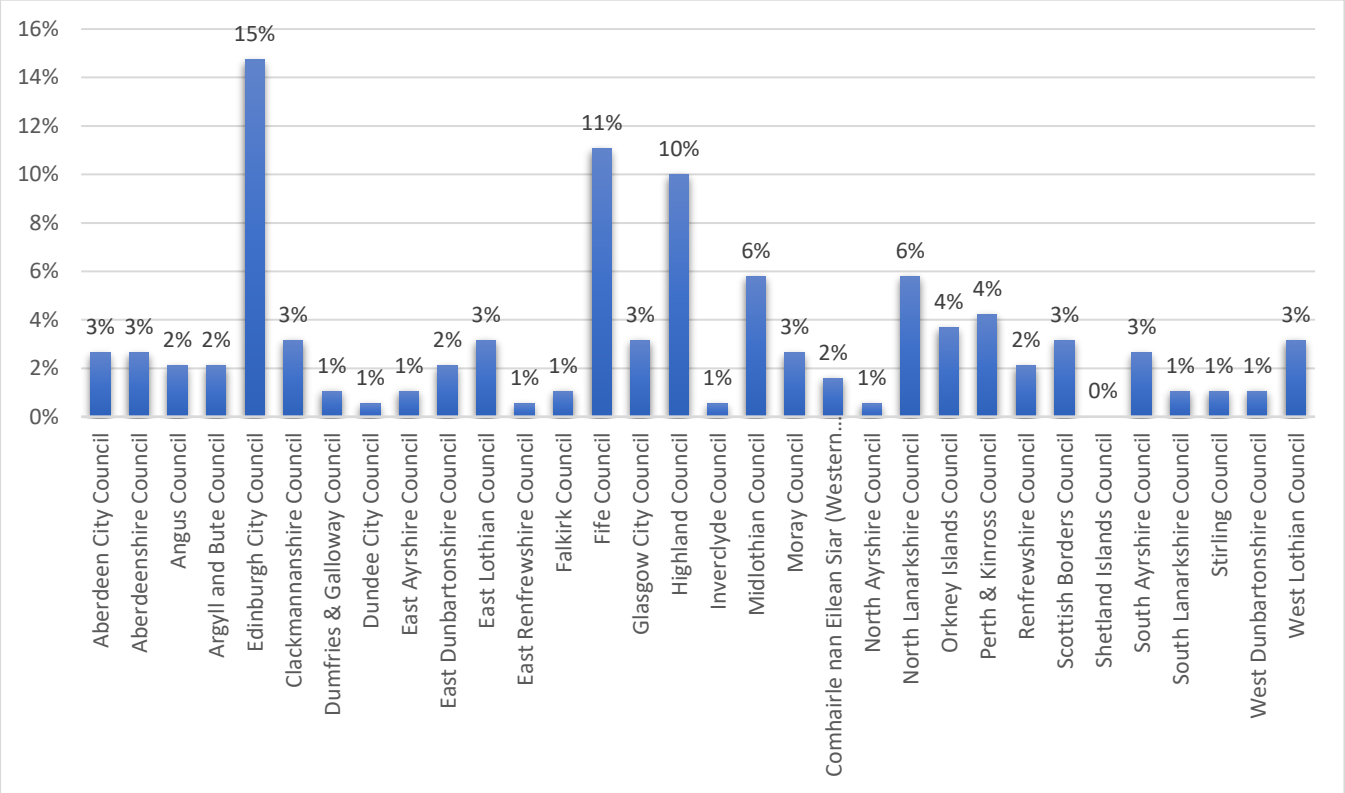

Figure 11: Local Authority where Veterans Lived

Fig 11 above demonstrates that a significant proportion of the sample included veterans who resided in Edinburgh City Council (15%), followed by Fife Council (11%) and Highland Council (10%). Most respondents expressed satisfaction with their local area. Some of the reasons cited include good neighbourhood and friendly neighbours, scenic location, suitable area for local school for children, opportunity for home ownership using military funding whilst in service, substantial Armed Forces community in the area, good access to local amenities and easy commute to and from work as well as cities, opportunities for outdoor activities due to rural living. There were also those who settled in the specific area as they grew up there, had friends and family, were in the area due to work or chose the local authority in planning their resettlement for civilian life. Several areas were identified more than once and rated as

[31] Figures rounded.

excellent areas to live. These included Edinburgh, Glasgow, and the Scottish borders. However, one area stood out as the most popular and that was the highlands: *"The Highlands are an outstanding place to live. They are safe, the people are extremely friendly. There is also a large Armed Forces community here both serving and veterans. Having worked very closely with the local authority on many Armed Forces and veterans issues this is a hugely supportive LA (local authority). Indeed, they have initiatives which have been singled out as best practice across all LA's in the UK."*

Several respondents noted the benefits of living in the central belt and access to local amenities, as noted by a respondent who lived in Edinburgh City Council: *"close to outside space, close to local amenities and close to public transport."* Fife council was another area with a higher concentration of veterans in our survey. One individual noted that their veteran status was considered positively by Fife council in their housing application after leaving the forces: "*When I left the Army, I got divorced and my daughter was living with me in a married quarter…I had applied for a council property, I was given extra points for being ex-military…and I was then offered a flat, where I still live to this day."*

Only a few individuals noted dissatisfaction with their local authority due to poor employment opportunities, dilapidated infrastructure, and disproportionate service for increased council tax. Others argued that the current political ideologies made it difficult for them to identify as a veteran due to fear of stigma. For instance, one participant expressed that they felt uncomfortable in North Lanarkshire Council, and let down with the Armed Forces Covenant, as they have not been successful in securing employment: *"I do not feel comfortable. The Armed Forces Covenant is just a 'Word'. I have applied for many junior positions, even having the experience and qualifications, but it was just a tick box exercise on interview to show they were interviewing veterans."*

Another veteran from Aberdeen City Council expressed they were dissatisfied with their local authority as they felt unwelcomed for not being Scottish: *"It really is a dog-eat-dog city - nobody seems to give a hoot about their neighbours or community. If you are not Scottish, you're not welcome."*

Lastly, to consider the perspectives of island communities, a veteran expressed great dissatisfaction with their local authority which has fewer amenities due to their lower

population density, which makes it even more difficult for veterans and amplifies isolation by fostering a sense of abandonment: *"Local population density is low, meaning amenities and opportunity in this area are limited. This is compounded for veterans, who form a very small section of a dispersed community. The effect of this, for me personally, is amplification of a sense of isolation and abandonment, which already seems almost universal amongst veterans."*

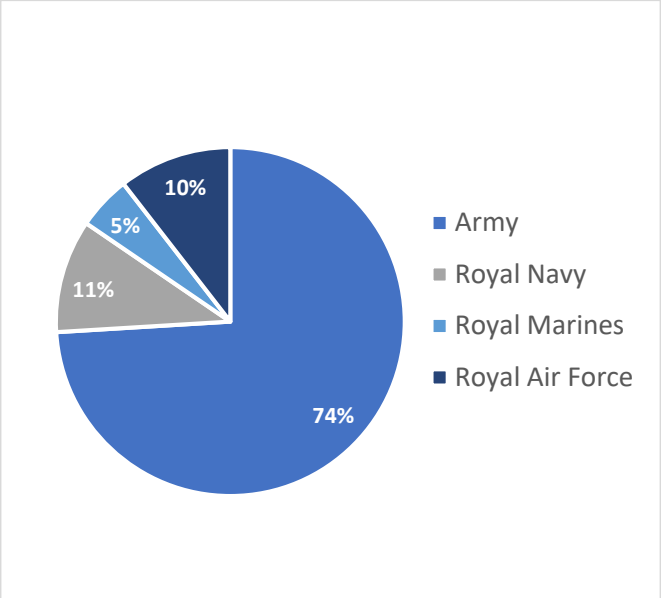

Figure 12: Armed Services of Veterans

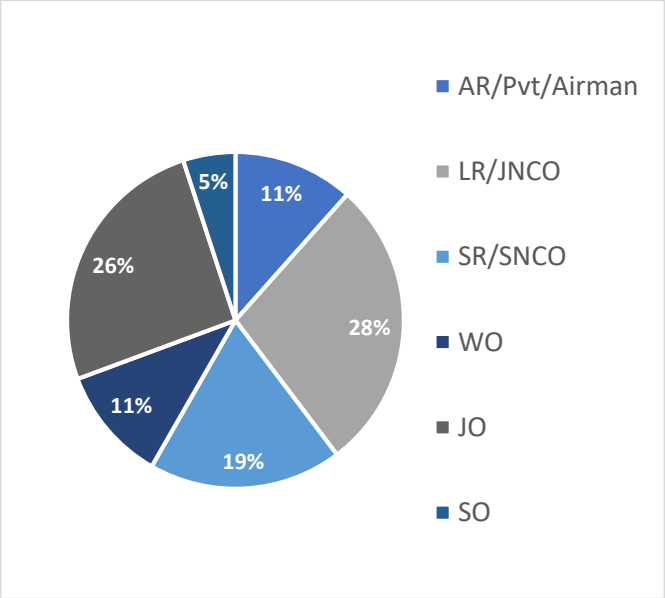

Figure 13: Rank of Veterans

Fig 12 above reveals respondents' background in the armed services, with 74% coming from the British Army. However, significant proportions also served in the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force (10%)[32].

While a greater proportion of the respondents are of a lower rank, with a majority from Leading Rate/Junior NCO (28%), there are also those of a higher rank, Junior Officer (26%), followed by those in Senior Rating/Senior NCO (19%), and Warrant Officer 1 or 2 (11%)[33], as can be seen in Fig 13 above. The average length of service was almost 15 years[34] with the lowest length of service being 1 year and the highest length of service being 42 years.

[32] Figures rounded.
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[34] Figures rounded.

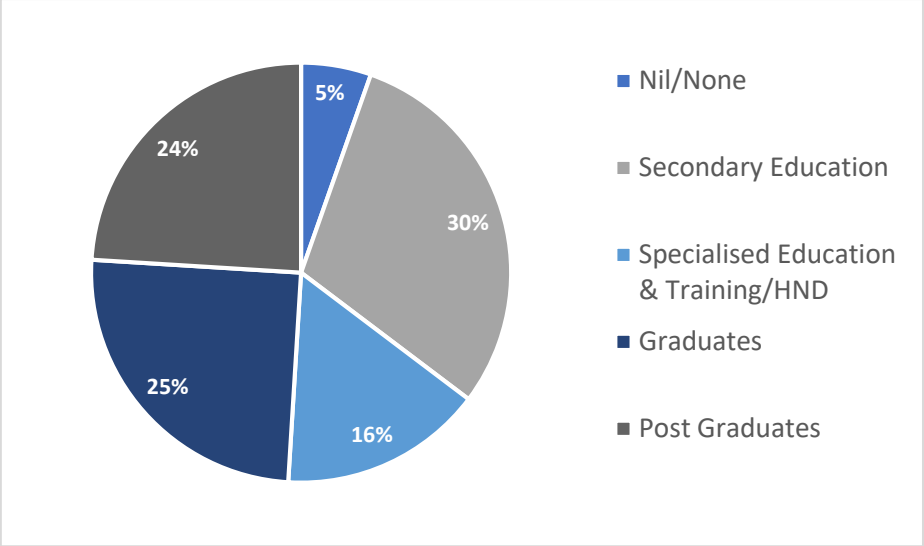


Figure 14: Educational Attainment of Veterans

Fig 14 above indicates that a significant proportion of the respondents have attained Secondary Education (30%), closely followed by those who have acquired secondary education (25%). However, there were also a significant proportion of postgraduates (24%) and those with Specialised Education and Training (16%).

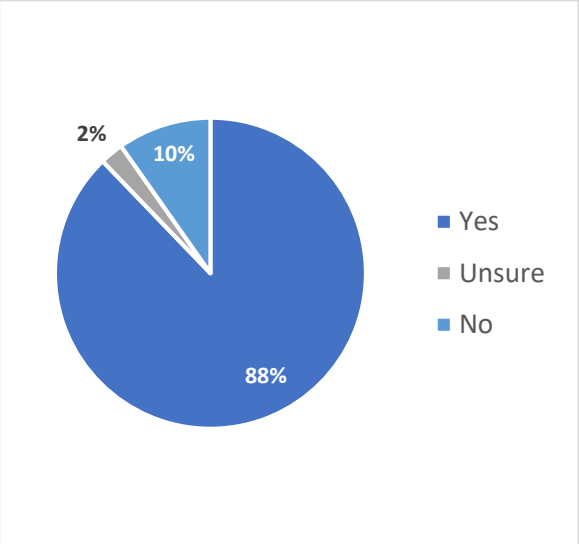


Figure 15: Awareness of AF Covenant

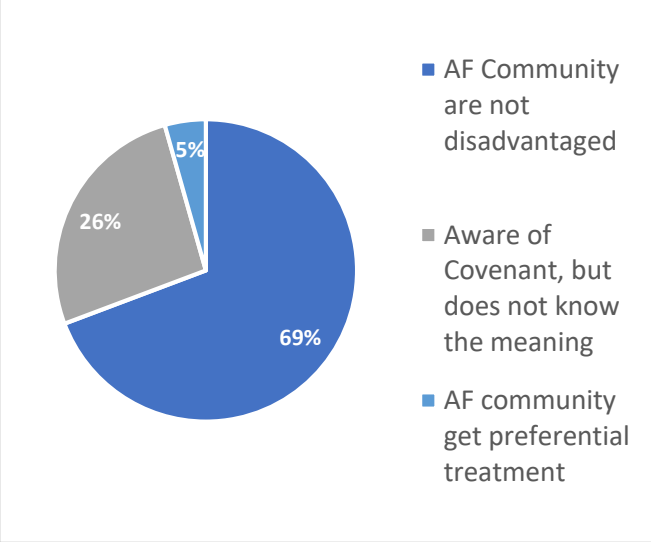


Figure 16: Understanding of AF Covenant

A significant proportion (88%) of the respondents indicated that they were aware of the Armed Forces Covenant, however 10% indicated that they did not know about the Armed Forces Covenant. Likewise, while a large majority of the respondents express greater understanding of the Covenant (69%), a significant proportion (26%) have expressed that they

do not understand the relevance of the Covenant. Awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant is compared against the findings of Service personnel in Survey 2, Section 5.3.1 further below.

5.1.1 Experiences of Transition

This section examines some of the experiences of the veterans and focuses on their perceptions of time in the Forces, how long it took them to find meaningful employment after leaving the Forces, finding the right place to live, their satisfaction with their local area, their sense of belonging, and their satisfaction with the Scottish Government's provisions for veterans and their families.

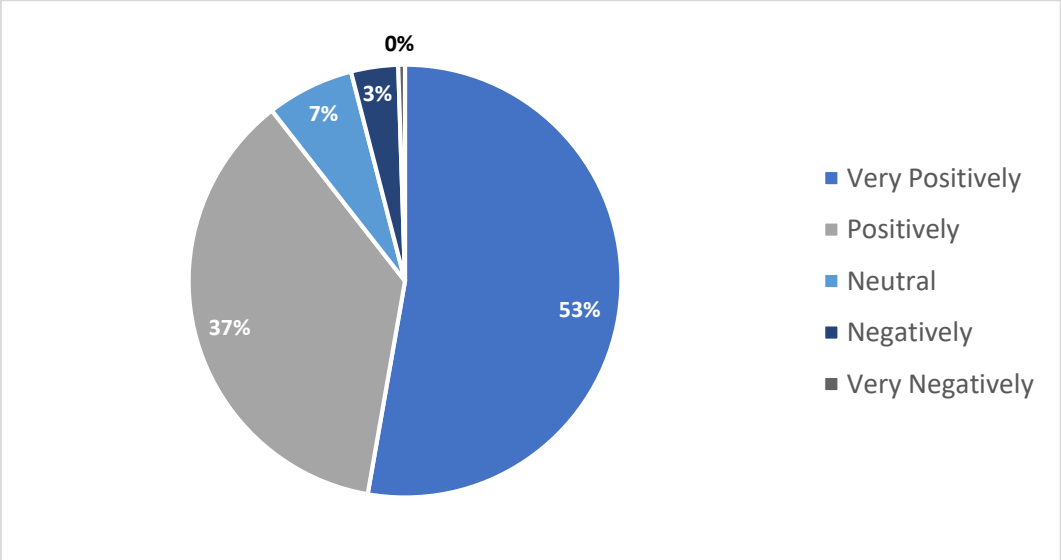


Figure 17: Perception of Time in the Armed Forces

A significant proportion of the respondents perceived their time in the Armed Forces very positively (53%) or positively (37%), as evident in Fig 17 above. Respondents were asked about the most impactful aspect of their basic training. Several respondents described camaraderie, discipline, confidence, resilience, and teamwork as being the most impactful. One respondent noted how basic training helped them to direct their future development *"On reflection, I feel that the experience of teamwork and camaraderie during an intense period of fatigue and pressure helped to direct my future development".* The importance of a good mentor during basic training was also highlighted by several respondents *"My training Cpl. was a big influence; his quality instruction provided me with the correct tools to progress within the Army."*

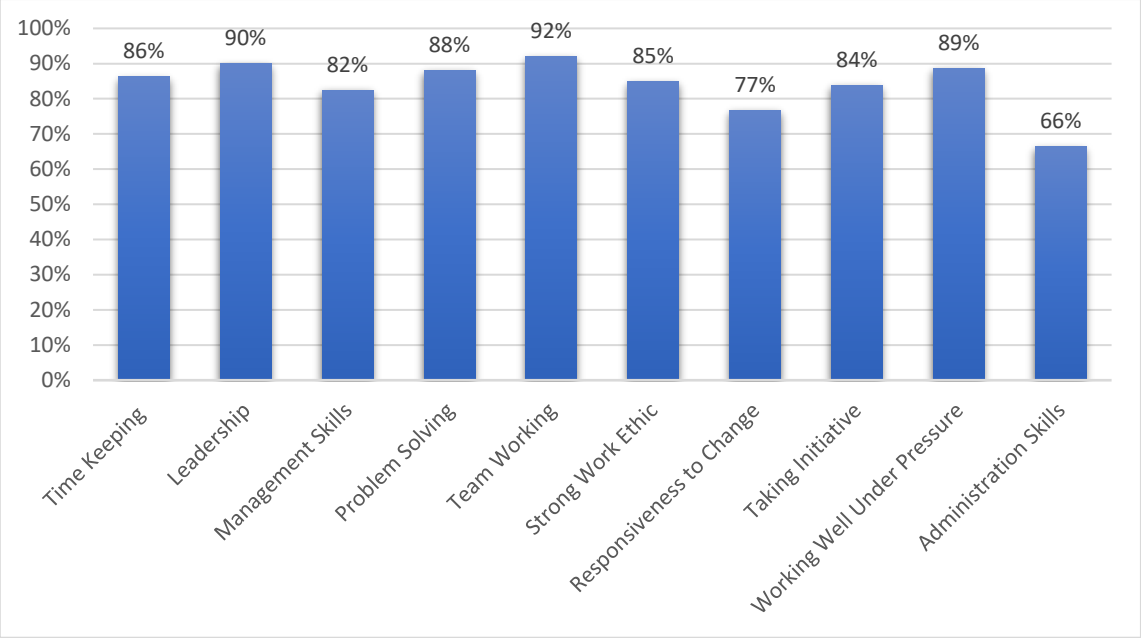


Figure 18: Skills & Attributes Acquired through Service

Fig 18 above demonstrates the skills and attributes that veterans perceived they acquired during their time in the Armed Forces. Individuals identified team working (92%) as their strongest skill, followed by leadership (90%) as their strongest attribute. Other skills included working well under pressure (89%), problem solving (88%), time keeping (86%), and having a strong work ethic (85%). However, individuals also identified other skills and attributes not listed above, including social responsibility, discipline, resilience, risk management, reliability, and selfless commitment.

Furthermore, participants were asked whether they have been treated positively or negatively due to their connection with the Armed Forces. Most of the respondents said they were neither positively nor negatively treated. Several participants experienced positive treatment. For instance, one participant stated that they had experienced positive treatment *"Positively - for what I have done and what I stand for".*

However, there were also those that had experienced negative treatment, particularly, gaining employment due to negative stereotypes of being a veteran. As noted by one participant *"…at job interviews I have been looked over at having no experience as the experience gained was in the Armed Forces rather than a civilian employment."* Others have cited difficulty in gaining credit for finance, insurance purposes and securing housing because they have had to move location whilst serving *"Throughout my early career I found moving*

around and changing addresses made it more difficult to secure financial packages or build a good credit score."

Yet others reported experiencing both negative and positive treatment. For instance, several participants noted *"Like many, I have experienced both. Negatively when applying for work and my previous experience was not understood. Positive when requiring support from NHS/ DWP."*

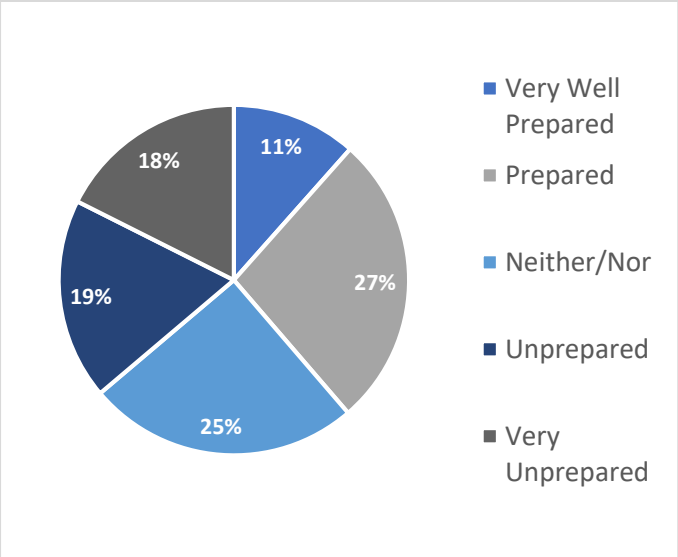


Figure 19: Preparedness for Civilian Life

Fig 19 demonstrates that a mixed perspective with 27% feeling prepared for civilian life while 25% expressed ambiguity. Alternatively, 19% felt unprepared and 18% reporting that they felt very unprepared. Respondents were also asked to provide three words or phrases about their thoughts of resettlement, several respondents described it as *"Scary, apprehensive, unknown"* as well as *"Not ready, fear and just general anxiety of having to leave the military life."* This also included those that had been medically discharged, and some of the difficulties they experienced due to service-related injuries. For some individuals this made them feel undervalued and *"unfit for purpose".*

Others expressed uncertainty with some expressing positive thoughts from being in employment and having bought a house and feeling settled in Scotland *"I'm well settled in Scotland, a friendly place to be."* However, others indicated negative experiences as they lacked job application, interview, and CV building skills, as well as stigma of being a veteran and stereotypes in acquiring employment. Further illustrated by a participant *"I never chose to leave the Armed Forces, to me it was like stepping off a cliff. I was prepared for re-integrating back into civilian society but was not well prepared for the employment market." "My eyes are opened to how much the civilian work environment does not understand what a ex-Service man has to offer."*

Several participants also indicated that they had insufficient support from their unit, and this impacted greatly on their transition to civilian life. For instance, *"Very quickly evident that the military could have done a lot more to prepare people for civilian life."*

Furthermore, they were asked whether their view of transition changed after discharge. Responses varied with some expressing no change and having a smooth transition, others felt lost, underprepared, and found the training from CTP unhelpful in securing employment. Some also described the difficulty in translating the education and training acquired in the Forces into civilian qualification, as articulated by one participant *"I am now far more prepared but do feel I lacked qualifications and insight into how to transfer skills or how and what to sell about myself."*

Yet others felt prepared and described the importance of self-development and early preparation whilst in service, as expressed by one participant *"Individuals are given the tools to leave well prepared for life outside of the Army. Those who apply these tools, plan well and early almost always have a good transition. It is those who tend to leave things to the last minute or fail to engage with the leaving process all tend to struggle."*

Some participants recognised the norms of interaction in the civilian world which were markedly different to those of the military, and that there was no preparedness for dealing with the emotional side of transition, as expressed by one participant *"part of your 1-year transition is an awareness training what to expect to talk to peers who have come out the Army and use real scenarios what to expect. The Army provides a safety umbrella but does not prepare you to stand on your 2 feet when it comes to lifestyle changes."*

Fig 20 below demonstrates that a significant proportion of the respondents succeeded in securing meaningful employment (73%) and accommodation (67%) under one year of discharge.

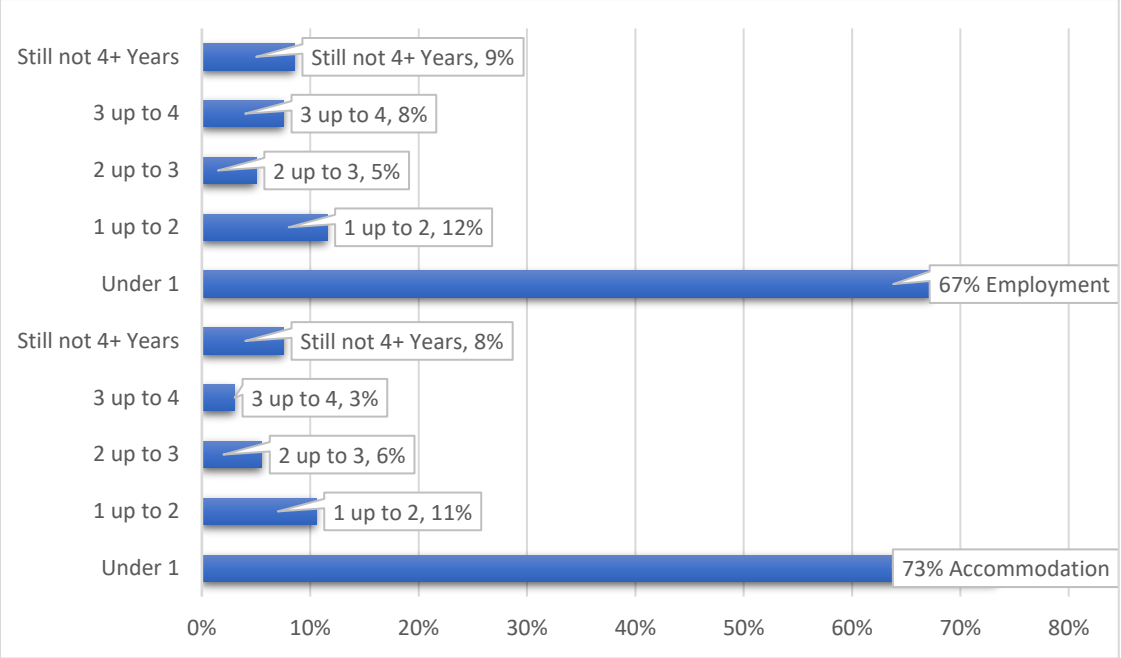


Figure 20: Time Taken to Find Meaningful Work and a Suitable Place to Live

Respondents reported great levels of satisfaction (40%) with the local area in which they reside, as can be seen in Fig 21 below. Respondents also indicated the need for additional support for facilities such as: mental health support, access to healthcare, dentist, housing, and childcare – particularly wraparound support, benefits, financial as well as training and education (including Enhanced Learning Credits). Access to some of these were exacerbated due to Covid-19, however others reported difficulty in accessing facilities such as education and training due to lack of funding.

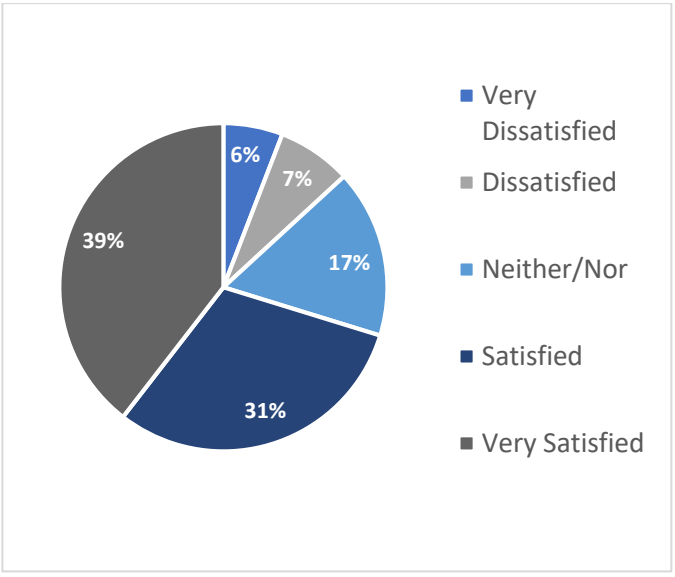


Figure 21: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with Local Area

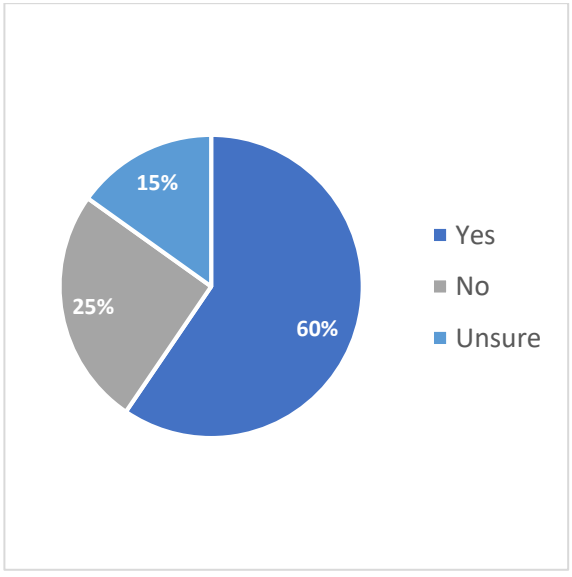
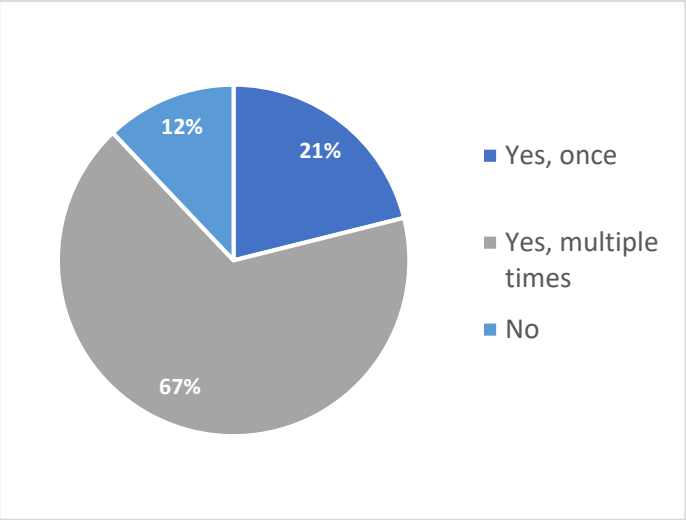


Figure 22: Sense of Belonging

Furthermore, Fig 22 demonstrates that they also reported a significant sense of belonging (60%) with the local community in which they live post discharge. However, 25% also reported that they did not feel part of the community in which they live after discharge from the Forces.

Figure 25: Operational Deployment



It is evident from Fig 23 that 67% of respondents have completed multiple deployments with 21% being deployed at least once. However, 12% have never been on an operational deployment.

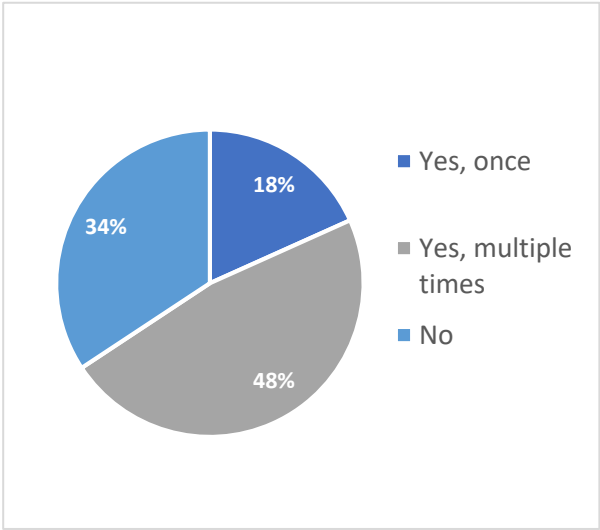


Figure 23: Experience of Combat

Fig 24 indicates that while 47% of respondents indicated that they had experienced combat multiple times, 34% indicated they had never experineced combat.

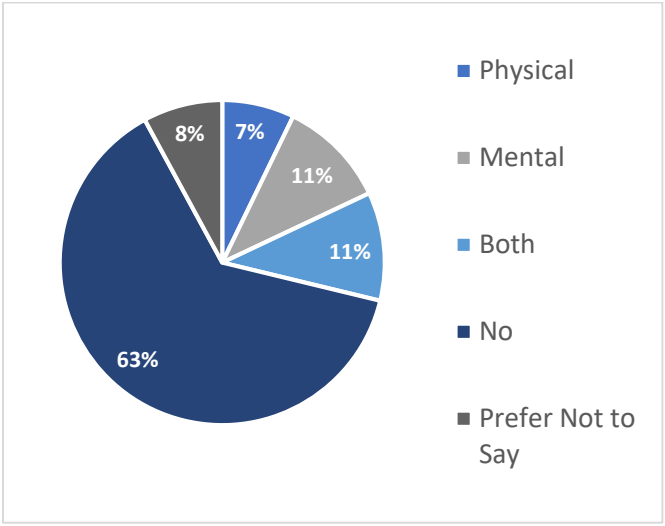


Figure 24: Injured or Wounded During Service

A significant proportion of the respondents (63%) did not sustain any injury during service, however a small proportion indicated that they had experienced physical (7%) injury, mental (11%), while 11% indicated that they had sustained both mental and physical injury, as can be seen from Fig 25 above. Respondents further noted that the injuries they sustained made it difficult for them to acquire and/or remain in employment. Respondents that were medically discharged acknowledged the support they received from the Personnel Recovery unit but expressed great difficulty in transitioning to civilian life. However, some have expressed a positive transition to civilian life after a period of difficulty, as well as some being able to do the job they did in the military in civilian setting.

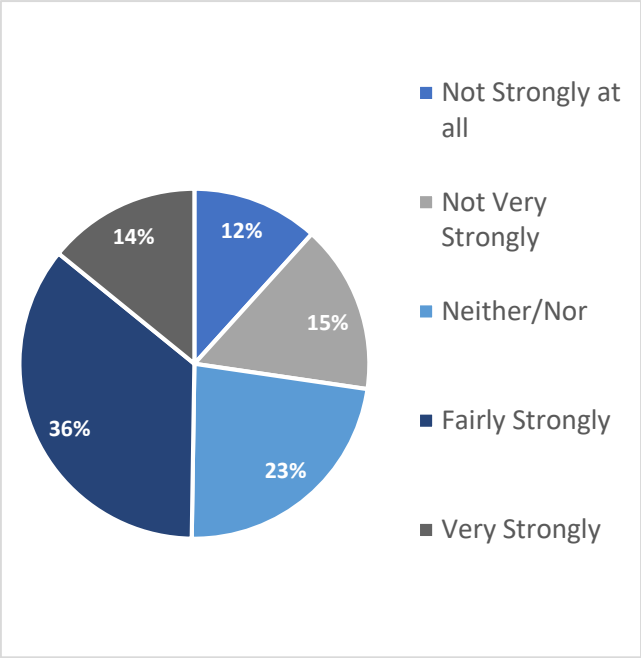


Figure 26: Sense of Belonging with AF Community

Fig 26 indicates a varied sense of belonging with the Armed Forces community following discharge, with 36% expressing a fairly strong sense. For instance, one respondent stated: *"Anyone who feels part of the local community usually has family and friends in the area, this can be a huge deciding factor in where leavers decide to settle. I was brought up in my LA area, without doubt this was a huge factor when my wife and I finally decided to settle in one place. The support for the Armed Forces community is tremendous, you are truly welcomed in the area with people still proud to have friends and family who serve or have served."* Several other respondents also stated that there was great support for veterans in their local community.

However, 23% expressing uncertainty, and 16% stating they did not feel a strong sense of belonging post discharge. For instance, a few respondents argued that they did not feel welcomed in the community due to their veteran status, while others argued that only other veterans could understand them. As expressed by a respondent: *"Only other Service personnel will ever understand how I think and work."* The pandemic has further restricted opportunities for other veterans in fully integrating with their local community.

Likewise, 70% of respondents expressed that they did not attend any serving military community activities, and only 30% did. Those who did, indicated that they attended *"Regimental Association meetings, Sea Cadets, Veterans Café, Men's shed, Officers Association Scotland events, Army reunions, Breakfast clubs… various parades including activities in the local town hall… memorial golf*." Others attended leisure or sports clubs that were more integrated with civilian society, for instance, church, local rugby teams or sports clubs, and walking groups.

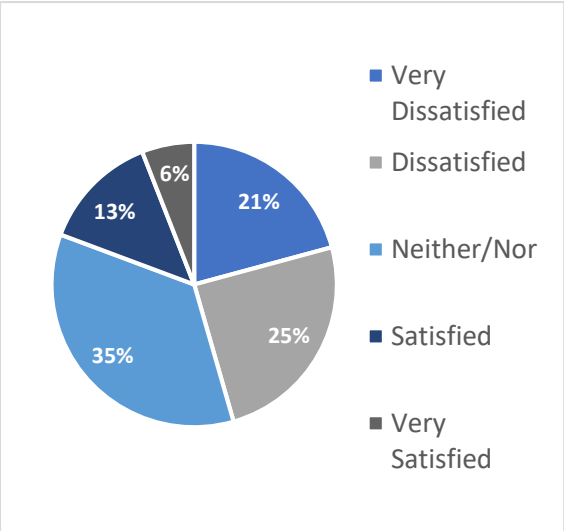


Figure 27: Satisfaction with UK Government

Fig 27 indicates that a significant proportion of the respondents were uncertain (35%) with the Government's provision for transition and resettlement when leaving the Armed Forces. However, a great proportion were dissatisfied (25%) and very dissatisfied (21%). Satisfaction was only expressed by 19% of the respondents. Furthermore, it was expressed that there was a need to better inform service leavers on housing, as expressed by several participants *"Access to vacant MOD housing stock until suitable council accommodation is available".* Other identified needs included welfare support, tax and money, education and learning credits, community and networking and greater support for the family in Scotland.

Respondents also stated that it was essential to align military skills and qualification with that of civilian skills as this hindered their employment opportunities. CTP employment and resettlement training was deemed inadequate with a greater focus on England and less so on Scotland. Furthermore, a disconnect in the information from the Service leavers guide was noted and it was reported that there was a need for greater support for resettlement not just for the Service leaver, but also for the children, families and particularly spouses. Indeed, it was noted that partners should also be allowed access to MOD resettlement information to enable an informed transition. The addition of a veterans' network during resettlement was deemed beneficial.

5.2 Summary

The data from survey 1 provided us with insight into the entry and exit patterns of the sample, the rank and service they represented; the time they spent in their service and if and where they had been deployed. More revealing was the amount of qualitative data that was provided in each response. This part of the response allowed us to develop our questions for the stage 2 interviews from a much more informed perspective. At this point it appeared that many veterans who had chosen to settle in Scotland were happy with the choice of area they have made. The majority are content with the services offered by local councils. A small

sample of wives had completed the veteran survey and relayed negative experience in terms of information related to transition and its availability to the spouse. We know that the Financial Aspects of Resettlement (FAR) briefings are co-ordinated by Right Management Limited, and all service leavers and their families are eligible to attend. There are also housing briefings co-ordinated by the Joint Service Housing Advice Office (JSHAO)[35] for which both groups are also eligible to attend. Recognising this was from the veteran sample we accepted that the time-lapse may have accounted for the lack of this service.

5.3 Survey 2: Service personnel

This section provides a socio-demographic profile of the Service personnel and addresses their attributes, background characteristics and the type (and longevity) of their service within the Armed Forces. The number of cases available for analysis in Survey 2 (N=100), 7 responses were incomplete, making the total number of responses for Survey 2 (N=93).

5.3.1 Profile of Service personnel

This section examines the profile of the Service personnel who participated in the online survey. Service personnel expressed similar reasons for joining the Forces as did the veterans, ranging from family heritage/tradition; seeking adventure/varied life experience, job, and travel opportunities; to escape their hometown; career development opportunities after leaving school; exceed in sports and desire to fight and defend the country.

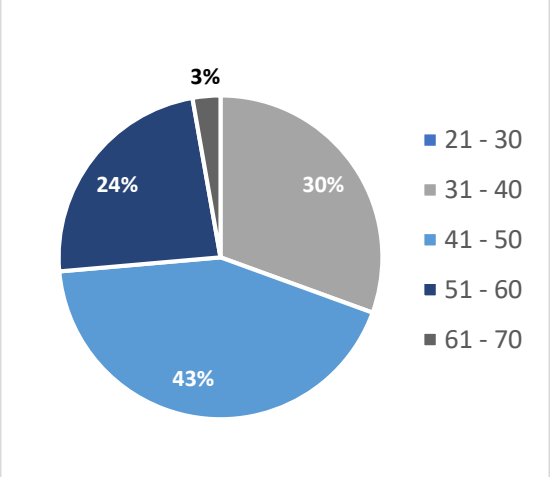


Figure 28: Age Range of Service personnel

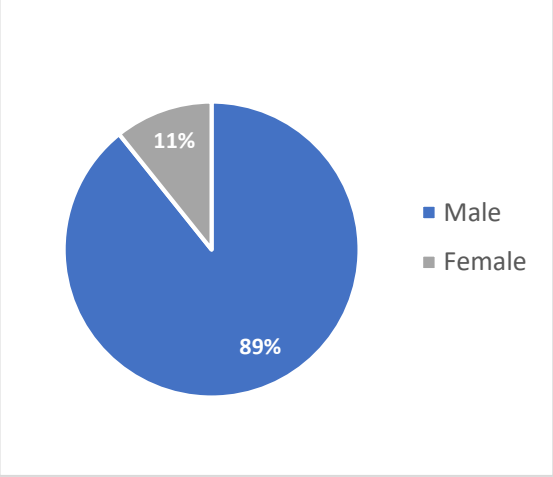


Figure 29: Gender of Service personnel

[35] Please note that the guidance for JSHAO was withdrawn on 8th March 2023 and is no longer current. It is now provided by DTS.

A plurality of respondents can be seen in Fig 28 above, from the 41–50-year age group (33%) and the average age of the sample is 41. A significant proportion of the sample is also from the 31–40-year age group (24%), followed by those from the 21–30-year age group (23%). The sample is male dominated as evident in Fig 29 above with 89% male and 11% female.

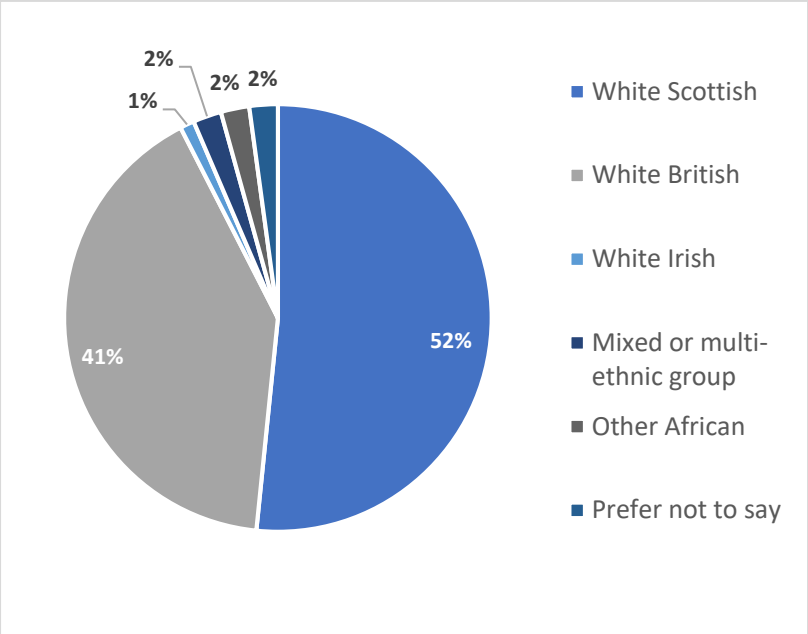


Figure 30: Ethnicity of Serving Personnel

The sample predominantly self-identified as White Scottish (52%), White British (41%) as demonstrated in Fig 30. A very small number of participants identified as Mixed or multi-ethnic group and Other African (2%), and there were a limited number of respondents who identified as White Irish (1%).

Service personnel were further asked about their living arrangements. 37% of the respondents lived in their own home, closely followed by those that lived with their partner in their own home (29%), and those who live in Armed Forces accommodation (27%). There were also respondents who indicated that they resided in alternative accommodation (8%) for instance, in rental accommodation, living with parents, and those that lived in forces accommodation and their family home at weekends.

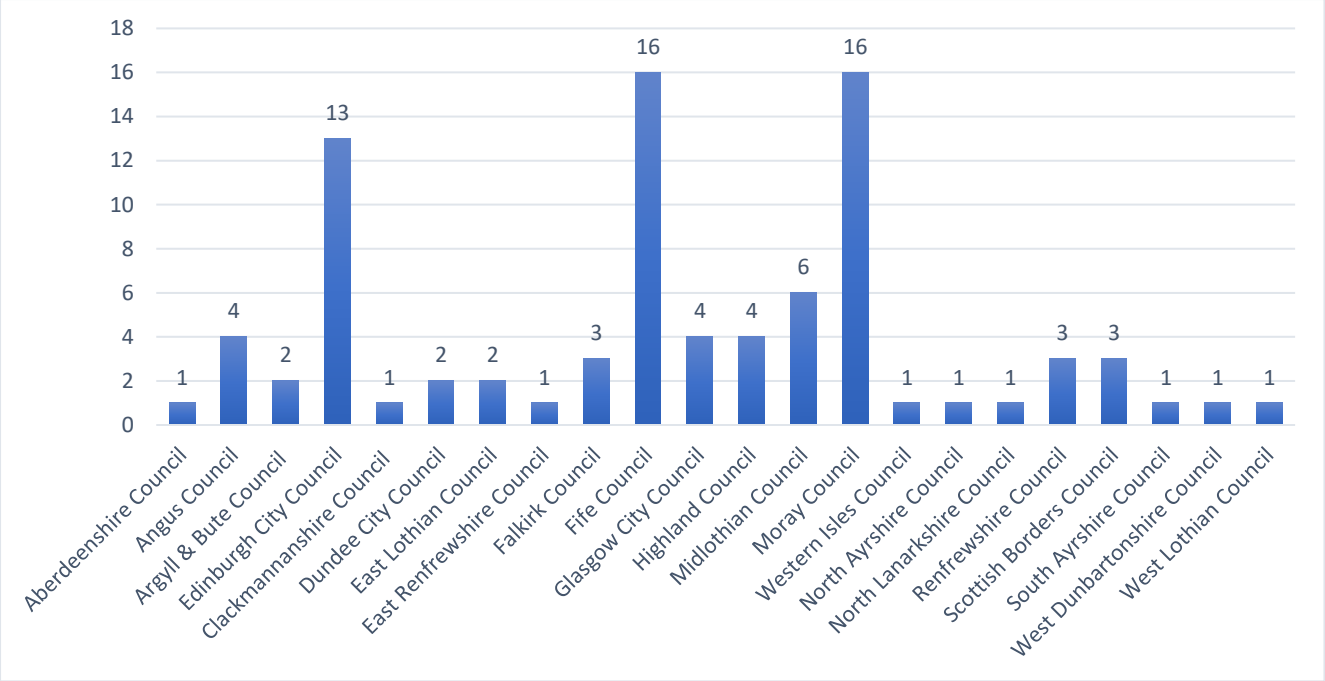


Figure 31: Local Authority of Service personnel

Not surprisingly a significant proportion of the sample included Service personnel residing in Fife and Moray Council (16), followed by Edinburgh City Council (13) and Midlothian Council (6) as these reflect the locations of major military bases in Scotland, and demonstrated in Fig 31 above.

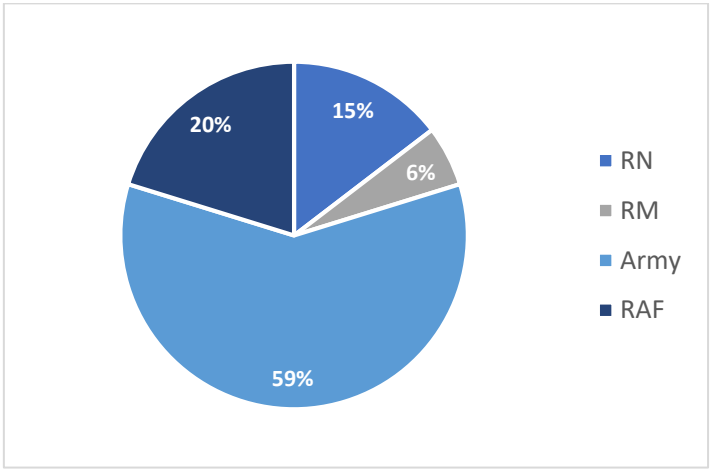


Figure 32: Armed Service of Service personnel

Fig 32 reveals respondents' background in the armed services, with 59% coming from the British Army. However, significant proportions also served in the Royal Air Force (20%), the Royal Navy (15%) and Royal Marines (6%)[36].

[36] Figures rounded.

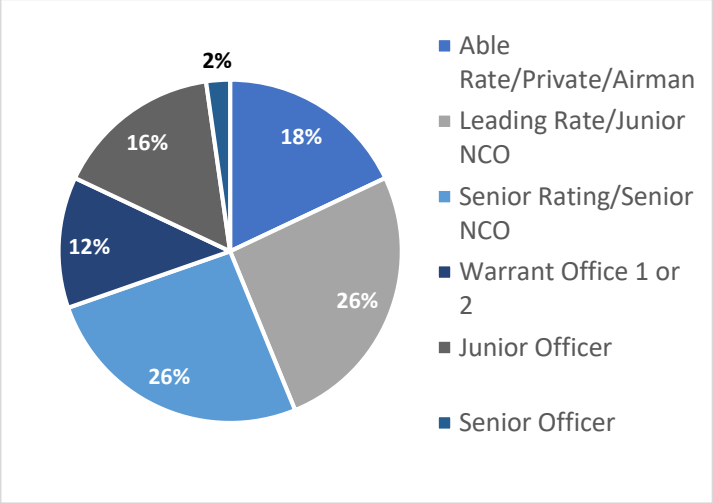


Figure 33: Rank of Service personnel

A greater proportion of the respondents were of a from Leading Rate/Junior NCO and Senior Rating/Senior NCO (26%), there are also those of a higher rank, Junior Officer (16%)[37], as can be seen in Fig 33. The average length of service was approx. 20 years[38] with the lowest length of service being 3 years and the highest length of service being 44 years.

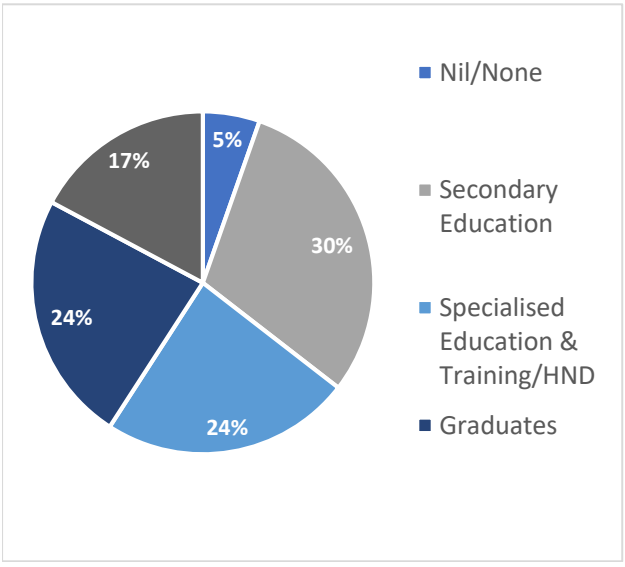


Figure 34: Educational Attainment of Serving Personnel

Fig 34 indicates that 30% had acquired secondary education, closely followed by attainment of a degree level or a specialised education and training qualification (24%). However, there were several Service personnel who held a post-graduate qualification (17%).

[37] Figures rounded.
[38] Figures rounded.

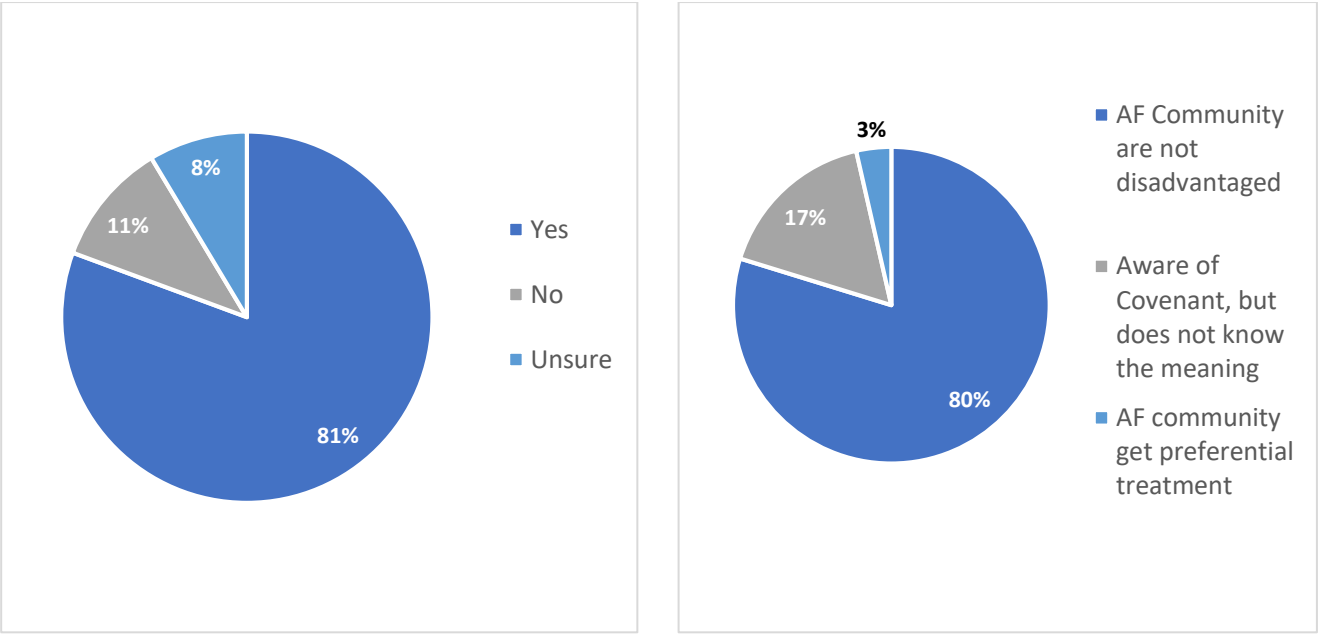


Figure 35: Awareness & Understanding of AF Covenant

A significant proportion (81%) of the Service personnel indicated that they were aware of the Armed Forces Covenant, however 11% indicated that they did not know about the Covenant. Likewise, while a large majority of the respondents express greater understanding of the Covenant (80%), a small proportion (17%) expressed that they did not have a good understanding of the relevance of the Covenant. Indeed, in comparison to the veterans (Fig 15 & 16, Section 5.1), Service personnel demonstrate a better understanding of the AF Covenant.

5.3.2 Expectations of Transition

This section examines some of the experiences of the Service personnel and focuses on their perceptions of time in the Forces, their satisfaction with their local area, their sense of belonging, and their satisfaction with the UK Government's provisions for Service personnel and their families.

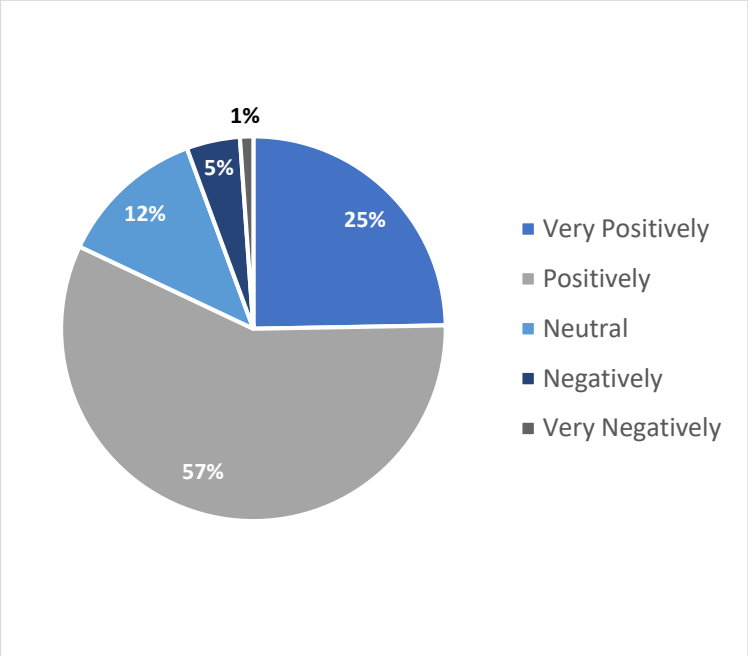


Figure 36: Perception of Time in the Forces

A significant proportion of the respondents perceived their time in the Armed Forces positively (57%) or very positively (25%), as evident in Fig 36. Respondents identified impactful aspect of their basic training ranging from discipline/structure, resilience, professional/trade development, support network and team working, as well as developing leadership skills.

Furthermore, participants were asked whether they have been treated positively or negatively due to their connection with the Armed Forces. Several Service personnel stated that they did not disclose their military identity, unless it was a close family member or friend. Most respondents identified mixed experiences. The most positively cited experiences included the advantage of receiving a defence discount/concession card, and quicker access for healthcare. However, some of the negative experiences included that the Armed Forces Covenant was not being upheld, increase in insurance premiums due to frequent deployments and change in address, employers lack of understanding of military qualifications and skills and greater taxation in Scotland.

Fig 37 below demonstrates the skills and attributes that Service personnel perceived they acquired during their time in the Armed Forces. Individuals identified team working (82%) as their strongest skill, followed by leadership, taking initiative, and working well under pressure (90%) as their strongest attribute.

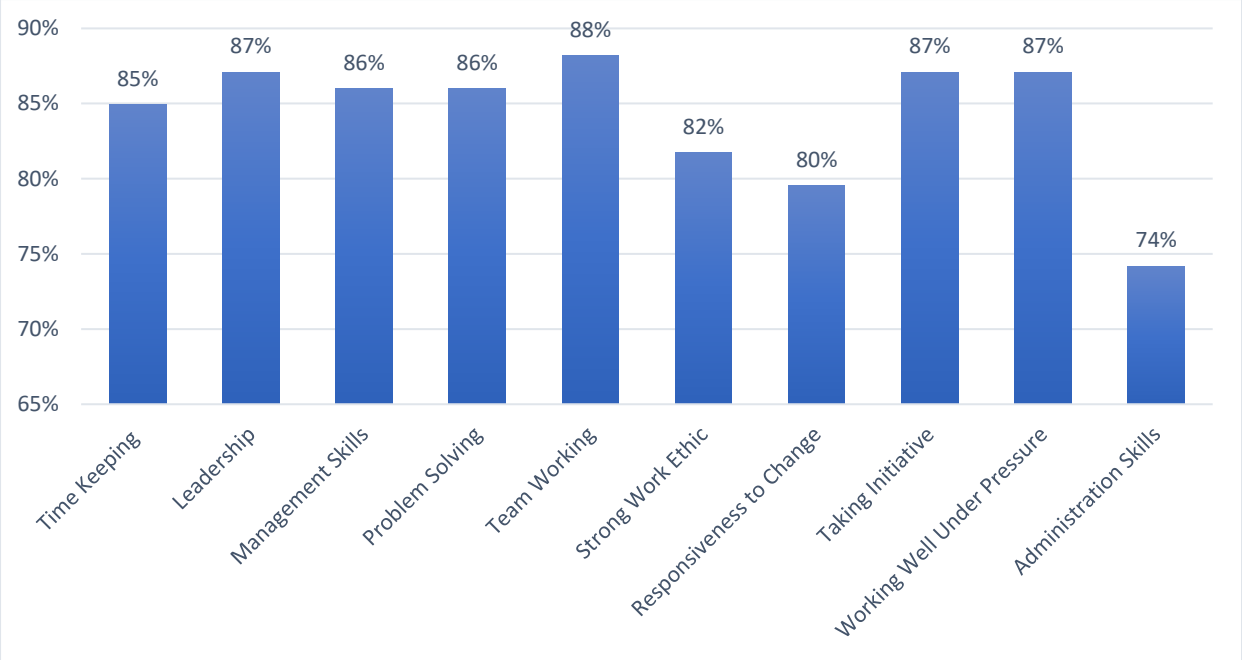


Figure 37: Skills & Attributes of Service personnel

Our data from veterans who transitioned in the last 10 years allowed us to determine changes in how Service personnel in Scotland are recognising their skills and how these might be employed in civilian life. The additional skills identified by this group included working well under pressure, management skills, and problem solving (86%), and time keeping (85%). However, individuals also identified other skills and attributes not listed above, including technical skills, legal knowledge, the ability to multi-task, and communication skills.

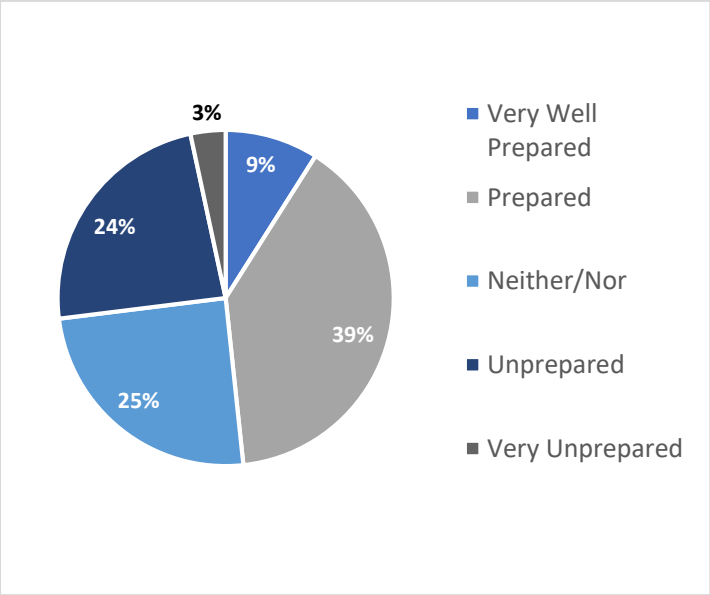


Fig 38 demonstrates that 39% of Service personnel felt prepared for transition. Several expressed apprehensions regarding employment in their chosen sector. Several participants felt comfort in not worrying about their next posting and being able to make plans with their spouse and family.

Figure 38: Preparedness for Civilian Life

Although 25% of the Service personnel expressed uncertainty about preparedness for civilian life, these included those who joined the Forces later in life, and those who experienced difficulty in securing employment post discharge. Nonetheless, 24% of Service personnel expressed they felt unprepared for civilian life. Some participants expressed lack of unit support, while other cited their length of service and the difficulty in adapting to civilian life, as illustrated by one individual from the RAF *"It isn't really a feeling of being unprepared, it is more of a fear of the unknown after spending so long serving in the RAF."*

Respondents were also asked to provide three words or phrases to describe their decision to resettle in Scotland. Majority of respondents expressed that they chose Scotland to resettle due to their Scottish roots or having family in Scotland. Others stated that Scotland offered a better lifestyle with good outdoor spaces and a better work-life-balance. Several others identified that housing was cheaper in Scotland making homeownership easier than the rest of the UK.

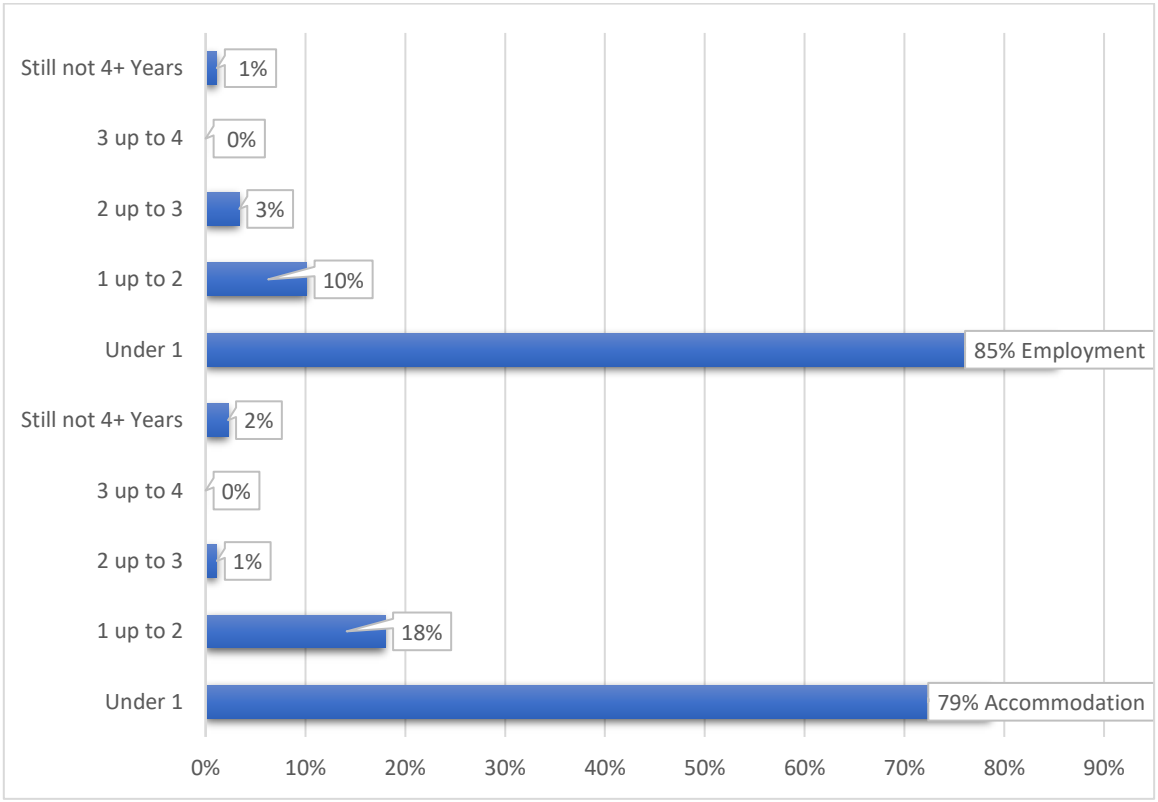


Figure 39: Perception of Length of Time to Find Meaningful Work and a Suitable Place to Live

Fig 39 above demonstrates that a significant proportion of Service personnel perceived that it would take them less than a year to secure meaningful employment (79%) and accommodation (85%) post discharge.

Service personnel reported great levels of satisfaction (77%) with the local area in which they reside, as can be seen in Fig 40 below. Majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with their local authority. Some of the reasons cited include scenic location with quiet surroundings, having a village nearby, substantial Armed Forces community in the area, good access to local amenities and easy commute to and from work as well as cities, opportunities for outdoor activities due to rural living. As expressed by one individual *"A warm, friendly community and I have great neighbours."* Several individuals also noted that they were unable to feel part of their community because they were still serving, and this inhibited them in engaging in community activities.

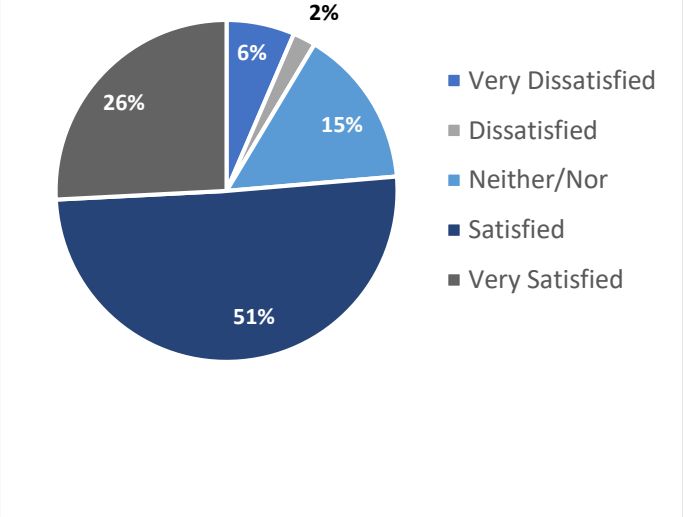


Figure 40: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with Local Area

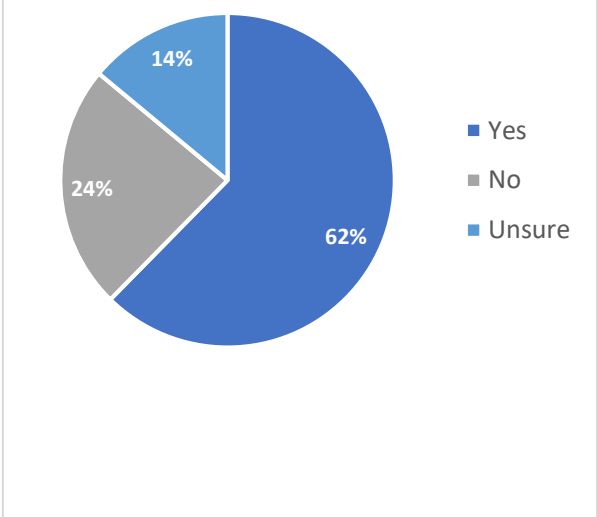


Figure 41: Sense of Belonging

Furthermore, Fig 41 demonstrates that they also reported a significant sense of belonging (62%) with the local community in which they lived during service. However, 24% also reported that they did not feel part of the community in which they lived in whilst serving. For instance, it was noted that serving families are housed away from the local community

which prevented them from integrating *"The Service Families housing estate is outside of the local community, there are no joint efforts to enhance the community spirit."* Respondents also indicated the need for additional support for facilities such as: dentist, local council housing, access to Enhanced Learning Credits for pursuing a course of their choice or access to further/higher education.

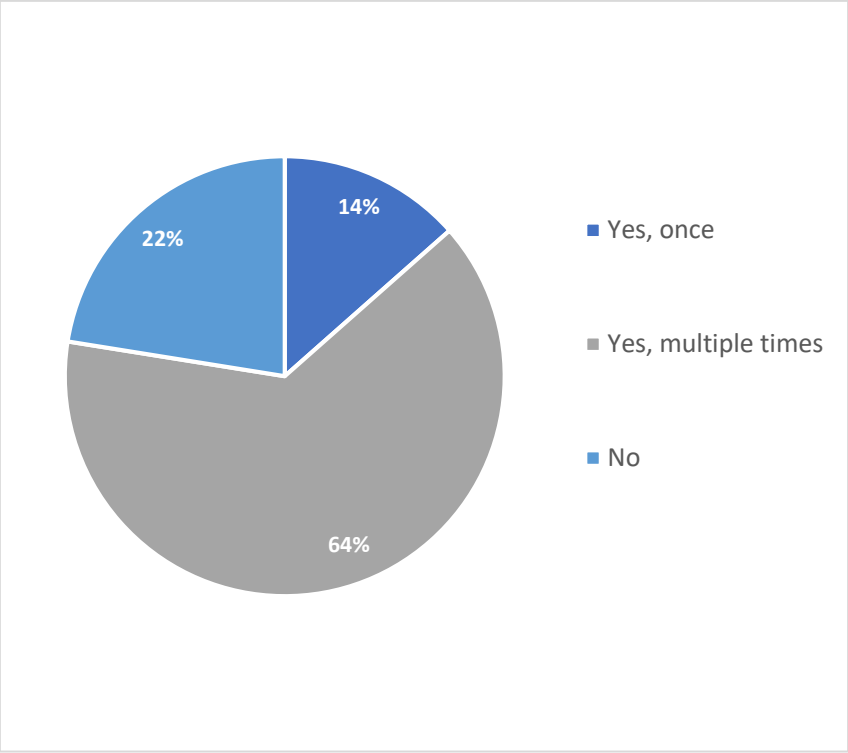


Figure 42: Operational Deployment

It is evident from Fig 42 that majority (64%) of respondents have completed an multiple operational deployments. While, 22% have never undertaken an operational deployment.

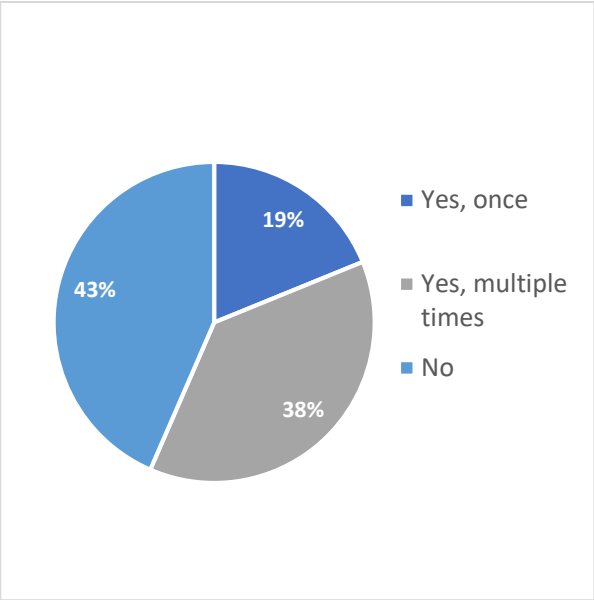


Figure 43: Experience of Combat

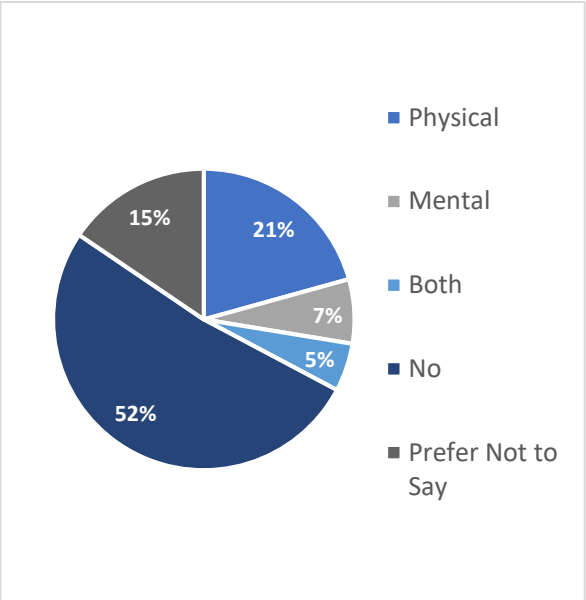


Figure 44: Injured or Wounded During Service

While 38% of respondents indicated that they had experienced combat multiple times, 43% indicated they had never experineced combat.

Over half of the respondents (52%) did not sustain any injury during service, however a small proportion indicated that they had experienced physical injury (21%), and mental injury (7%). Only 5% indicated that they had sustained both mental and physical injury, as can be seen from Fig 44 above. Respondents further noted the injuries they sustained made it difficult for them to acquire and/or remain in employment. Some respondents who were medically discharged acknowledged the support they received had been limited. Indeed, a few noted their injury impacting on their promotion, as well as being treated as a burden*: "Injury stopped promotion and possible discharged. Treated differently, a burden".*

Fig 45 below indicates that nearly half of the Service personnel were informed (45%) about the Government's provision for transition/resettlement when leaving the Armed Forces. As expressed by participants *"I have done some brief" …" I know fair bit about it but I can see how it could easily be missed".*

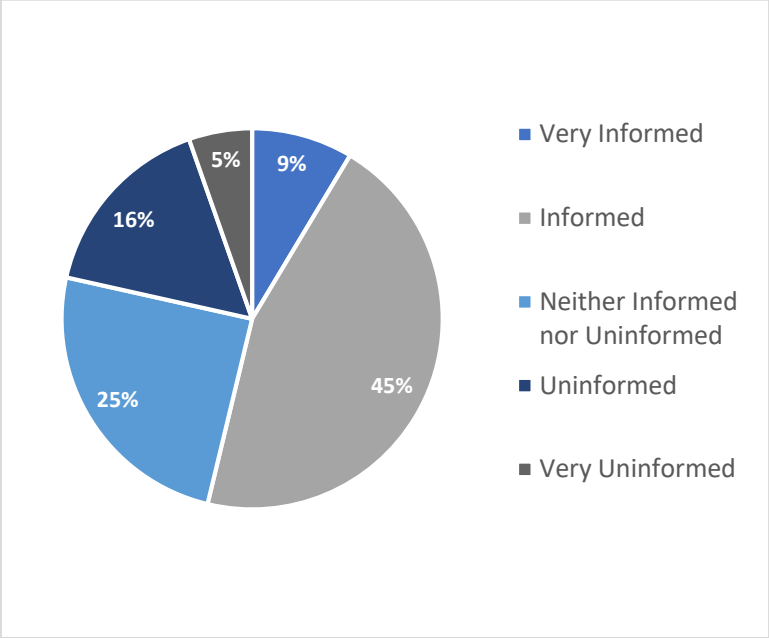


Figure 45: Informed/Uninformed with Government's Provisions for Transition Support

Nonetheless, 25% were ambiguous about the available support. Indeed, some expressed that the provisions were *"not really discussed through transition and this is a fear",* yet another stated *"I know where to look but I feel quite disconnected. The Government's provision is far outstripped by charities and networking groups"*. While there was greater awareness of resettlement there was lack of awareness of provisions available to them in the Civilian world. 16% of respondents felt uninformed, as expressed by one individual *"there is a lot out thee we are not told about"*.

Furthermore, several Service personnel expressed that there was a need for greater stability through extending the terms of assignments, such that individuals are only deployed every five years, as articulated by one individual "*The ability to extend terms of assignments. My current assignment is only 2 years but would allow me to settle better if it could be extended for up to 5 for example." Other aspects that were identified included greater support for spouses/partners when settling in a new base, pursuing education, as expressed "better*

recognition of the support role the family plays in a service person's life. Whether that is by monetary discount schemes or some other retribution I don't know". Better service housing as well as better community interaction with local units. Several also noted the higher rate of tax in Scotland and access to travel expenses for visiting family elsewhere.

5.4 Summary

This section of the research focused on data in relation to the profile of the veterans as well as Service personnel and their experiences of transition. The socio-demographic profile of the veterans and Service personnel involved, illustrated that the respondents were typically white Scottish, male, and aged 41-50, with a background in the British Army. However, there was good representation from female participants in Survey 1. Generally, respondents had specialised in education and/or training, with a higher proportion of those who were graduates and post-graduates. The living arrangements indicated that most respondents lived with their partner/spouse and/or homeowners. Additionally, while there was an awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant, a significant proportion of veterans indicated that they did not understand the meaning of the Armed Forces Covenant. However, there was greater awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant among Service personnel.

Lastly, a greater proportion of the respondents expressed that they felt either unsure or unprepared for transition to civilian life. It is important to emphasise that the findings cannot be applied to the potential wider Scottish veterans/Serving population at this point. Chapter 7 provides a more detailed account of the qualitative data by providing insight into the lived experiences of those who have transitioned and those in the process of transition and their partners/spouses.

Realising through interviews that employability was an unexplored area, we developed an employer questionnaire and the findings of this are further explored in Chapter 6, Section 6.4. In an attempt to gain further insight into the number of veterans employed in public sector organisations FOI requests were made to all key uniform services in Scotland and the outcomes of this are explored in Section 6.5.

6 Stakeholder Perspectives

6.1 Introduction

The Military Covenant has evolved since the millennium to raise the profile of the Armed Forces community (including, regulars, reserves, veterans, and their families) and help ensure they are treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy, and society they serve or have served. It potentially offers support to transitioning military personnel and their families through the civilian agencies providing access to medical and dental, housing, education, employment, and social services. This requires a multi-agency approach and communications strategy to create awareness, access, and infrastructure to improve positive outcomes for Service personnel and their families. The Covenant is well supported in Scotland: many public bodies, including all 32 local authorities, were early signatories. Developments in veteran employment, education and health were influential in the selection of participants for this area of the study. Our key stakeholder interviews reported below suggest there is solid support for veterans in Scotland, and sound evidence of strong partnership working.

There are many charities supporting veterans in Scotland, however the key charity, which brings together almost 90 different Service and ex-Service charities, is Veterans Scotland (VS). VS advises the Scottish Government and works to promote better understanding of the Armed Forces Covenant among statutory and non-statutory bodies. Their website Veterans Assist provides comprehensive information, advice and support on education, housing, pensions, and employment.

In this chapter we report on the outcomes of interviews with Key Stakeholders who offer support to Service personnel and veterans in Scotland. We selected a purposive sample who would be able to provide us with insights into the support specifically available for Service personnel, veterans, and their families. We started by exploring the support offered to Service personnel during and following transition. For this we conducted observations with CTP. This informed us about the partnership working with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and gained insights into how qualifications were being transferred from military to civilian qualifications. We further discovered how Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) was also linked in the process and helping in the mapping of these and the other

developments which have come together to form a strong partnership in supporting veterans in gaining skills and employment. Support services for health and mental health were also reviewed. Issues relating to the education of Armed Forces children in Scotland through to the opportunities in accessing Higher Education Institutes, as well as the National Transitions Officer of Scotland and the ADVANCE Higher Education Further Education network (ADVANCE HE: FE). Charities including the Tri-service Family Federations, Veterans Scotland, and Poppyscotland were interviewed to provide insight into the support mechanisms offered to Service Leavers, veterans, and their families.

6.2 Career Transition Partnership (CTP)

We conducted three sets of participant observation across nine days with CTP. The Career Transition Workshops (CTW's) were deliberately selected to observe different group mixes. All three were introductory workshops and had a mean population of 12 participants made up of mostly men but two had female participants. Our observations from the introductory three-day CTP workshops proved to be highly informative in terms of the delivery of the workshops and the materials provided and the overall milieu of the workshops themselves.

All Service leavers, regardless of reason for discharge (contract end, notice to terminate, medical discharge or compulsory discharge) have access to the full resettlement entitlements they are eligible to receive, dependent on time served, so they can undertake resettlement training to re-skill for a new career. It was interesting to note that on 20 May 2022 Tri-Service resettlement policy changed (2022DIN01-052) now ensuring all Service leavers are compulsorily registered for CTP services at some point in their resettlement period. However, this was not evident in our discussions with the group at the time. Access to resettlement is now established as a key part of 'The Offer' and military Terms and Conditions of Service. In accordance with UK GDPR legislation Service leavers do retain the right to opt-out of CTP Services by informing their CTP career consultant.

The workbooks are of a high quality and interactive in nature but require commitment from the participant to work through the various components. The workshops use this material to promote understanding and discussion and to highlight areas for further work. As we will see in our realist dataset, it is this commitment and the timing of this intervention which ultimately can lead to the success or failure of the programme. However, if participants are willing to engage, these workbooks and the workshops are extremely valuable in terms of CV development, interview preparation, transferrable and negotiation skills, marketing, and branding. In workshops where participants were both willing and enabled to engage the outcomes were understandably better. Feedback from participants was in the main positive. The delivery of the workshops was professional in nature albeit at times where there was interesting discussion which was stopped in favour of completing the syllabus. There was an effort made to address the emotional aspect of transition at all the workshops. There was little uptake on this discussion despite interventions from our self and the CTP facilitator.

In line with our surveys, we witnessed a growing confidence in the participants in the recognition of the many skills that they could potentially bring to the civilian workforce. Participants spoke to us about their growing awareness of professional networks such as LinkedIn and the Gen Dit Network and how these were helping them to navigate their way towards future employment. Throughout the workshop all participants were given the opportunity to link into the SDS network and use the Skills Profiling Tool specifically designed for Service leavers for CV development. There was active interaction with the tool evident

and it was positively evaluated by all. Attendees participated in mock interviews to enhance their skills and confidence.

As part of the Core Programme, participants are allocated a personal Career Consultant, who is accessible throughout their resettlement to explore plans and career decisions and advise on training opportunities. Meetings with the consultant can happen as often as necessary to offer support on other options such as further education. There are a number of workshops from which to choose, the first of which is facilitated over a three-day period with workbook materials are provided. Follow on webinars include introduction to LinkedIn, CV and interview development skills working independently and developing financial skills. More recently civilian work attachments have been developed giving the individual the opportunity to spend time with a civilian employer to discover if this is an area for which they are well matched, and to receive on-the-job training.

In addition to the above we also attended two CTP employment fairs, one in Edinburgh and the second in Kinloss. We also attended four other employment fairs organised by the Officers' Association Scotland (OAS) in Edinburgh and the Gen Dit Network[39] in Glasgow. The amount of employment opportunities offered at these events cannot be underestimated. We witnessed interviews taking place on the day and job offers being made. It was at these events that we also became aware that it was not just the larger companies who were welcoming veterans into the community workforce. Our employment survey reported later (Section 6.4) demonstrates that it is not just the MOD's Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold award companies who were keen to employ veterans.

6.3 Partnership Working to Promote Employment Opportunities

Following some of the participant observation sessions with CTP, we then explored the strong partnership approach in promoting employment across four key bodies in Scotland. We subsequently interviewed representatives from Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), and OAS. There is a clear aligning of services from SDS, SCQF and OA, and as we now know, the new Gen Dit Network, which together are

[39] The Gen Dit Network was founded by Chris Shaw, former Royal Marine on LinkedIn. Although not an employer, this growing network is doing inspiring things for the Armed Forces Community - for current servicing personnel and veterans to share advice, support and experience on resettlement, networking, job search, transition to civvy life and beyond.

making a substantial difference to the experience of transitioning personnel in Scotland. Below is a more detailed account of this activity.

Since 2018 the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP) has undertaken a substantial amount of work to map military qualifications to those recognised by employers and education institutions. Starting with a scoping study of priority roles and the subsequent development of several leaflets, the project moved on to develop a revision of the MOD's qualification framework in Scotland. Through conversations with several awarding bodies many more qualifications became recognised on SCQF.

In our interview with SCQF we discussed the mapping of the Armed Forces qualifications project. They explained SCQF were approached by the Scottish Funding Council to undertake the mapping of qualifications for a better understanding of qualifications gained in the Armed Forces, so that both the service leavers and employers in Scotland would understand what those qualifications meant in the Scottish context. At this point a similar exercise had been conducted in England but the difference in the education systems and credit rating meant this had no bearing within the Scottish system. Recognising that there were about 1325 qualifications meant that it was a time intensive piece of work. Starting with a qualifications matrix which ultimately would inform everything that was being done. Simultaneously, discussions took place with the Defence Awarding Organisation, City and Guilds and a number of other awarding bodies. However, Covid delayed the process somewhat and it was not until sometime later that a few leaflets were developed mapping the qualifications. However, it was quickly recognised that leaflets can become out of date and so the mission to develop an online version of this exercise began in partnership with SDS.

In 2021 a grant of £35,000 was awarded by the Scottish Government to develop and support SDS and SCQF adapt the My World of Work Tool. Originally aimed at the younger workforce this online tool has been adapted to develop as a skills profiling tool specifically for Service leavers. The aim is to support Service personnel and veterans to understand the skills they have gained in the military and how these skills translate into language easily understood by civilian employers/institutions to gain a job or move into further learning. The pilot is currently active and in our participants observation with CTP we witnessed both the promotion and use of this tool.

6.4 Employers Survey

What we witnessed was the increasing understanding of the value that veterans brought to the workplace. In addition to the veterans and Service personnel questionnaires we developed an Employer questionnaire to capture both the perceptions of employers toward veterans and the key areas where veterans were employed across Scotland. The survey was developed from the initial literature review and was active from January to October 2022. The initial response in circulating this to all Scottish companies with a Gold Employer Recognition Scheme award was extremely poor. We then circulated the survey through the Veterans Employability Strategic Group (VESG). Response rate remained low. Finally, we made use of CTP Job Fairs including posting to their distribution list. A key advance in responses came from the Gen Dit Network and the Sandhurst Sisterhood network. The final number of cases available for analysis was 51. This section examines post-military employment of veterans in Scotland from employers' perspective. Also explored were the perceptions of organisations who signed the Armed Forces Covenant, as well as those who had not.

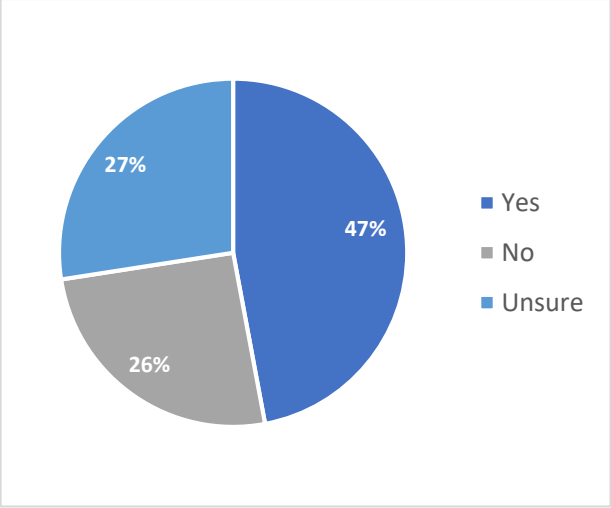


Figure 46: Membership of AF Covenant

Of the 51 responses a large majority (47%) were members of the Armed Forces Covenant. Several small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's) also completed the employer survey, who were either in the process of signing up to the Armed Forces Covenant (26%) or those that were keen to sign up but only had a few veterans in their organisation (27%).

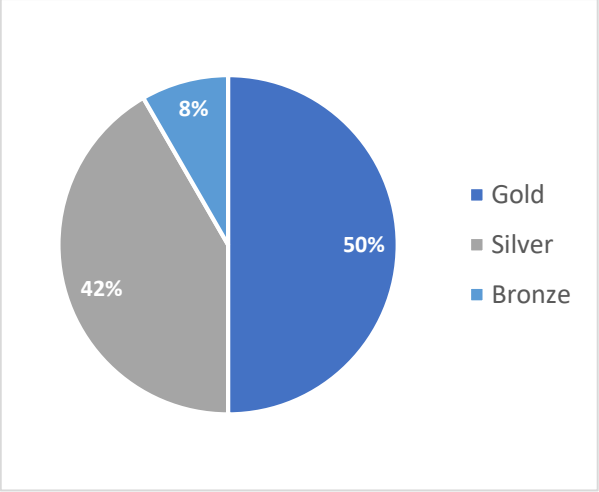


Figure 47: Membership Type

Correspondingly, a significant proportion of responses were from those with a Gold ERS Award (50%) who indicated that they employed between 50-800 employees with an Armed Forces background, including spouses of service leavers as most organisations did not incorporate means to distinguish between the spouse or service leaver. Silver ERS Award (42%) indicated that they employed between 20-35 employees. Most Bronze members (8%) indicated that they had approx. 10 employees with an Armed Forces background, while one organisation indicated that they had approx. 250-350 employees with an intention to apply for Silver membership.

The employment status indicated that 28 of the 51 organisations had Armed Forces employees in full-time positions, and four organisations had Armed Forces employees primarily in part-time positions. However, six organisations were unable to confirm the nature of the positions as they did not collect this information. An accurate account of the breakdown of employees by gender was not possible as most organisations did not collect this information accurately. Employers were further asked about the qualifications of Armed

Forces employees where there was a greater proportion of those with Specialised Education & Training/HND (30%), followed by secondary education (23%), graduates (18%), and equal proportion of post-graduates and those with no specific pre-requisites (14%). Fig 48 below demonstrates the sectors in which Armed Forces veterans are employed across Scotland.

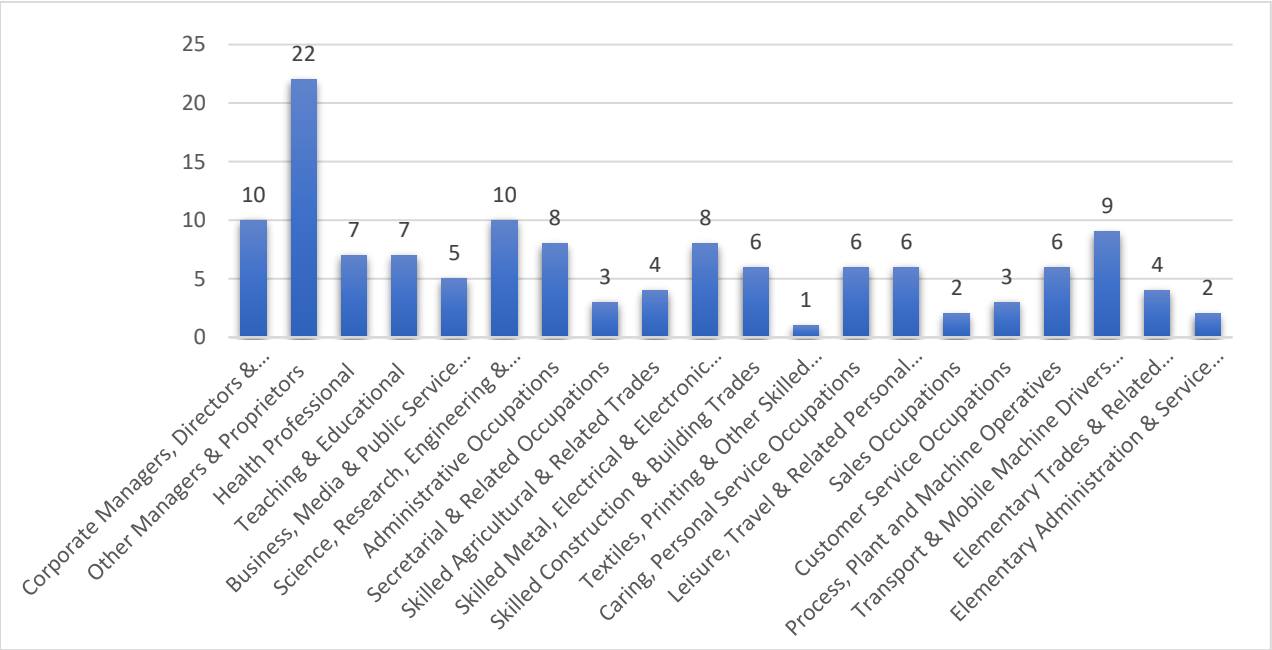


Figure 48: Employment Sectors of Armed Forces Employees across Scotland

Across the organisational sectors identified in our survey, there appears to be greatest retention in Other Management and Proprietary sectors (22), closely followed by Corporate Management and Directors and Science, Research, Engineering & Technology (10). Transport & Mobile Machine Drivers & Operatives (9) were other relevant sectors, as well as Administrative Occupations and Skilled Metal, Electrical & Electronic Trades (8). Exact figures could not be obtained as these were not often collected by the organisations.

Most organisations stated that the decision to sign the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) was taken at Board level. However, organisations did not always have capacity to ensure that their commitment to the AFC could be overseen by a dedicated team, individual or director (except for Gold ERS Award Members). Other facilitating factors that were identified in signing up to the AFC included increasing the organisations inclusion and diversity initiative, as well as increasing their recruitment and retention. While the organisations did not always perceive the AFC as a key activity or a significant contributor to their brand, several Bronze Award

holders and SME's expressed difficulty in navigating the various public and private organisations that comprise the UK defence environment.

Majority of organisations expressed that they were highly likely to recommend hiring veterans to other similar organisations. Most organisations had a dedicated champion or equivalent to lead the recruitment of veterans. Organisations also indicated that they had a good understanding of how military skills and experience fits in with their organisation's need. However, some limitations were also noted. For instance, most organisations did not advertise jobs through specialist consultancies/CTP, Military charities, and other agencies. Many organisations also did not have a dedicated military jobs portal, or an effective military recruitment programme to help achieve their business objectives.

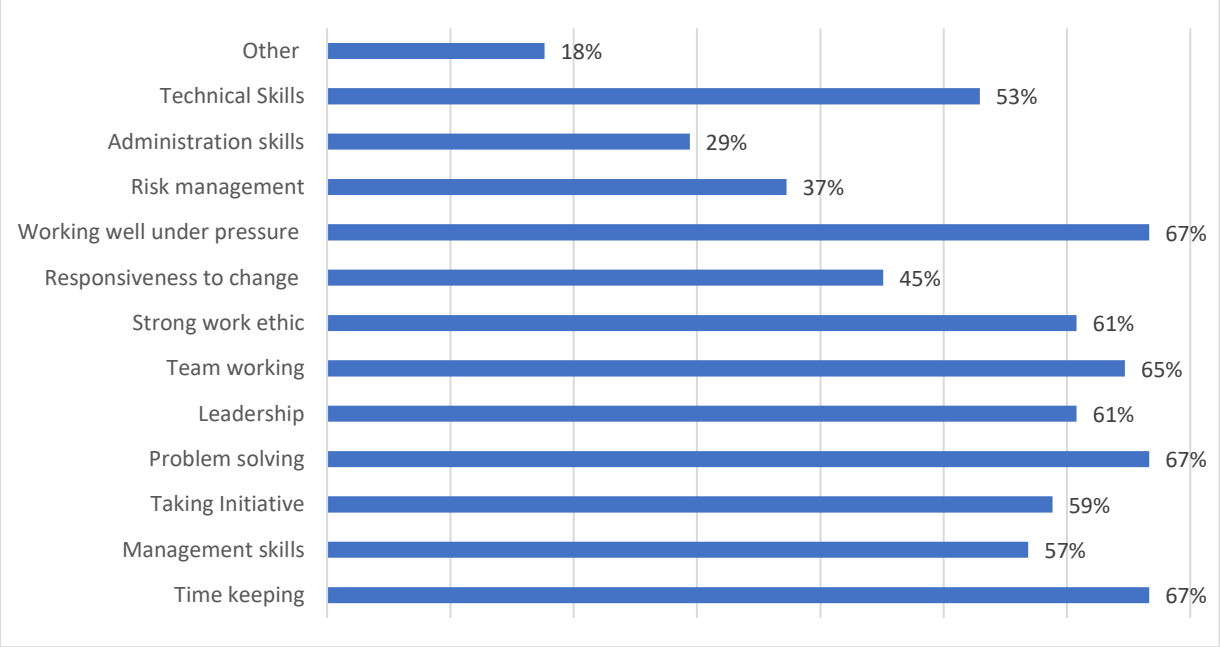


Figure 49: Skills & Attributes

Employers held positive perceptions of veterans and how they could contribute to their organisation such as, being able to work well under pressure, have good time keeping, problem solving, team working, and leadership skills. Some of the other skills identified included having the ability to motivate those around them, taking initiative, and management skills. Interestingly some of those identified were similar to the ones that were reported in Survey 1 and 2 by veterans and Service personnel in the CTP workshops. Indeed, one employer perceived service leavers as having greater physical and mental resilience in a more balanced way than many non-Service personnel: *"Service personnel tend to have a physical*

and mental resilience that allows them to adapt to change quickly and they cope with pressure and uncertainty in a more balanced way than many non-Service personnel. The downside to this wilco attitude is they are often less open about personal challenges, putting team and task ahead of themselves".

6.5 FOI Requests

In our context section we referred to the severe lack of accurate data in terms of veterans living in Scotland. We understood that the situation was set to change next year when the outcome of the census would be available. However, we also recognised that this would only identify the number of veterans and where they lived but would not provide any clear information on employment status, employer, and role in the workplace. Acknowledging this severe lack of accurate numbers for veterans in employment we chose to examine the uniformed services in Scotland. Our surveys and interviews had indicated that a high number of veterans were employed in the police, ambulance, fire brigade, NHS etc. To gain further insight into the number of veterans employed in public sector organisations FOI requests were made to all key uniform services in Scotland. These included but were not limited to: NHS Scotland, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, Scottish Prison Service, Transport Scotland, Scotrail, Scottish Power, Babcock International, and British Telecom. The format of the data requested included the number of veterans employed in the organisation for the past seven years and breakdown by gender and job family.

We were surprised to find that very few public sector employers kept any records which could shed light on the employability patterns of veterans across Scotland. Very few of those contacted were able to offer any valuable insights about veteran status, numbers, and qualifications in their organisation. Several organisations stated that sex is a "protected characteristic" under the Equality Act 2010. And as such, their disclosure control practices required them to suppress information where a group contained between 1 and 4 members, to prevent possible identification of an individual member of staff. Once again it was down to the individual to select to disclose if they were a veteran and as expected very few had chosen to do so. By means of good example of what we can understand when the data is available two examples from employers that did provide selected information, Police Scotland, and NHS Scotland, are examined below.

6.5.1.1 Police Scotland

Police Scotland indicated that there were approximately 344 currently employed who had an Armed Forces background. Table 2 and 3 provide an additional breakdown by Police rank and grade.

Table 2: Police Officers by Rank

Police Officers by Rank	Males	Females
Constable	226	20
Sergeant	66	5
Inspector	17	1
Chief Inspector	6	1
Superintendent	1	0
Chief Superintendent	1	0

Table 3: Police Officers by Grade

Grade	Males	Females
Grade 1	0	1
Grade 2	3	1
Grade 3	5	1
Grade 4	11	0
Grade 5	1	0
Grade 6	1	0
Grade 7	1	0
Grade 8	2	0
Grade 9	1	0
Grade 11	1	0

The greatest proportion of police officers with an Armed Forces background were males (67%) in Constable Positions while female constables only accounted for a small proportion (6%). There were a clear higher proportion of males in Sergeant roles (20%) in comparison to females (2%). Those in Inspector and Chief Inspector ranks were considerably lower. Likewise, while there appeared to be good representation of males in almost all grades, females were only evident at a much lower grade (Grades 1-3). It is important to note that figures representing Police Scotland were extracted from a list of Armed Forces organisations from a free text field and some variations may exist for information from the same organisation.

6.5.2 NHS Scotland

Like Police Scotland, NHS National Education for Scotland (NES) was also able to provide a headcount of NHS employees with an Armed Forces background for seven years (2016-2022). A total of 114 employees with an Armed Forces background were identified.

Fig 50 below demonstrates the number of males and females with an Armed Forces background employed across the NHS for the past seven years (2016-2022) in Scotland. There

appears to be an increase in the number of females with an Armed Forces background in 2022. However, it is important to note that these figures may not be a true representation of the number of Armed Forces personnel employed across NHS Scotland[40].

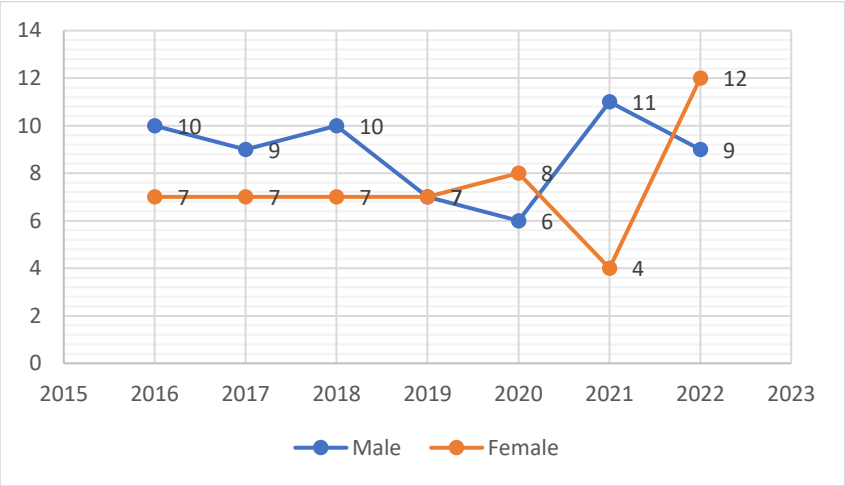
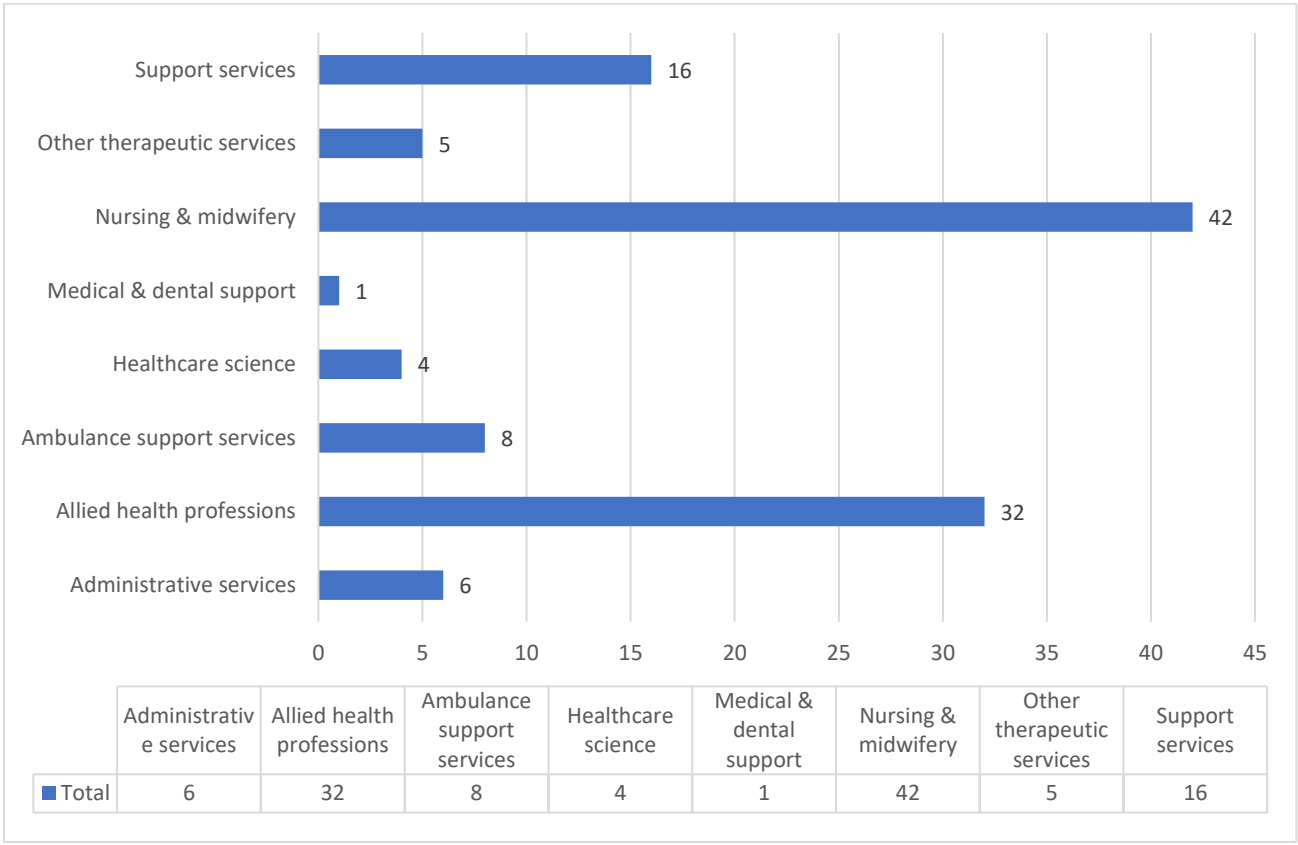


Figure 50: Armed Forces Male & Female Employees across NHS Scotland



	Administrative services	Allied health professions	Ambulance support services	Healthcare science	Medical & dental support	Nursing & midwifery	Other therapeutic services	Support services
Total	6	32	8	4	1	42	5	16

Figure 51: Breakdown by Job family

[40] Data for all staff are sourced from the Scottish Workforce Information Standard System (SWISS) where the Entry source field has a value "Armed Forces". SWISS holds live individual level data for all NHS Scotland staff. NES extracts employment data and noted that data are not quality assured, with 90% of records having a blank entry source. Data held on SWISS is fed directly from NHS Boards, who are responsible for the data accuracy.

Fig 51 above demonstrates the number of NHS employees with an Armed Forces background in Scotland from 2016-2022. It is evident that a large number were employed in Nursing and Midwifery roles (42), closely followed by those in Allied health professional roles (32). Other significant roles included those in support and ambulance support services.

Other organisations such as Transport Scotland indicated that their HR system was only updated to introduce self-service selection of veteran status information in December 2021. This meant that historical data for seven years was not held. Additionally, as this information was collected by a self-service it was possible that there were veterans who have not yet completed this question, meaning the data may be incomplete.

At the early part of this study, we requested trend data on Service leavers settling in Scotland, from TSLD by year, for the past 10 years broken down to include: Rank, Service and branch of Service; Date of enlistment/commissioning; Length of service; Gender; Reason for leaving service; Offer of resettlement training through CTP accepted; Resettlement course attended; Employment outcomes; Area settled in on leaving service. In the event very few of the categories requested were available and numbers were only available for the past 7 years in Scotland. For this reason, this material is more contextual than analysed as a separate data set. However, Fig 52 below provides an indication of the employment outcomes sought by those intended to settle in Scotland.

Outcome Sought[41]	Total	%
Employment Full-Time	3890	76.10%
Self Employed	243	4.75%
Apprenticeship	213	4.17%
Full-time Education	201	3.93%
Employment Part-time	133	2.60%
Re-joining Armed Forces	104	2.03%
Undecided	61	1.19%
Portfolio Career	46	0.90%
Retirement	36	0.70%
Employment PT	32	0.63%
Travelling	28	0.55%
Medically Unfit to Work	28	0.55%
Undeclared	20	0.39%

[41] Table excludes 2001 clients who did not provide outcome sought

No Employment Sought	19	0.37%
Employment - Contract or Freelance	17	0.33%
Looking after Family	17	0.33%
Part-time Education	7	0.14%
Carer for Family	6	0.12%
Volunteering	4	0.08%
Training	4	0.08%
Employment - Agency	2	0.04%
Internship	1	0.02%
Total	**5112**	**100.00%**

Figure 52: Service Leavers Outcomes Post Discharge

Our journey through this part of the study helped us to recognise the need for uniform data collection and the difficulty in organising this in a voluntary manner. We know that veterans and many active personnel do not like to disclose their forces status for security reasons. While the data that we managed to capture does provide some insight into the employment patterns of veterans in Scotland, this is by no means an accurate account, which would only be possible if a uniform data tool was developed and implemented across the uniform services in the first instance. In reality, if we want an overall accurate dataset on employability we may need to engage more strongly with our veteran population and place the onus on them to support this type of activity.

6.6 Education



6.6.1 Support for Armed Forces Children

For some 10 years the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) has supported the post of a National Transitions Officer for Children and Young People of Armed Forces

Families in Scottish Schools. A recent report[42] based on three years of data from across the 32 councils in Scotland identified that there at least 12,497 children and young people with an Armed Forces background in local authority educational provision across Scotland. This demonstrates a rise of 681 from the 2019 figures of 11,816. Of this total 33.4% have a regular forces background, 9.5% are from reserve forces with the majority of 46.7% being the children of veterans. A further 3.4% had parents with more than one of these backgrounds, while 7% of parents did not declare their background. Across the authorities only 2 collected data on whether the child was from an Army, Naval or Air Force background. Other than the ADES exercise reported above there is no attempt to collect and analyse data related to the education of Armed Forces children. Financially there are very different funding systems to support child education across the UK. Sections 7.9-7.11 reports on the substantial differences in provision of curriculum content, funding and special education needs in Scotland.

The educational issues for Armed Forces children in Scotland do not arise solely from mobility and separation. The mobility issue in particular is aggravated by the nature of educational provision in Scotland. The Scottish education system is separate to, and distinctive from those in the rest of the UK. This difference originates from before the time of Devolution, with a separate legal codex for education in Scotland. For the Armed Forces family moving to, or from, Scotland or for veterans considering settling in Scotland, these differences manifest in the following ways each of which can bring challenges for children's learning and their ability to fulfil their potential:

Distinctive Curriculum – at the macro level there is no national curriculum in Scotland. There are national curricular guidelines known as Curriculum for Excellence. These emphasise affective elements as well as basic literacy, numeracy, and subject-based knowledge. At the micro level certain academic subjects are unique to Scotland, and within subjects there is a Scottish emphasis not found in schools in the rest of the UK.

Distinctive Assessment system – all state schools in Scotland use assessments managed by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Rather than GCSEs, A Levels and AS levels,

[42] https://www.napier.ac.uk/-/media/worktribe/output-2867891/rallying-to-the-flag-a-consolidated-picture-of-armed-forces-childrens-education-in.ashx

children and young people are subject to "Nationals" (typically at levels 3, 4 and 5), Highers (1 year of study post 16) and Advanced Higher (1 further year of study).

Ages of Transition – there are no reception classes in Scottish primary schools, but there is a universal entitlement to early learning and childcare. Children move from primary to secondary school one year later than the rest of the UK, with a statutory school leaving age of 16 rather than 18. Scottish university first degrees tend to be 4 years in duration rather than the 3 years prevailing elsewhere. The school year is also different in Scotland. Children moving in or out of Scotland can face challenges from apparently repeating or missing educational stages.

Additional Support Needs (ASN)/Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) – for children requiring additional support the systems are dramatically different.

Table 4: Percentage of Children Requiring Support in England[43]

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
EHC plans/Statements of SEN (percent)	2.8	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.3	3.7
Support (percent)	11.6	11.6	11.7	11.9	12.1	12.2

Table 5: Percentage of Children Requiring Support in Scotland[44]

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Coordinated Support Plan (percent)	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.1
Pupils with ASN (percent)	22.5	24.9	26.6	28.7	30.9	32.3

In terms of impact, this legal difference is illustrated by Tables 4 and 5 above. This shows that while only 12% of children in England qualified for additional support, in Scotland this figure is over 30%. However, in terms of statutory measures the inclusive nature of Scottish education means that while only 0.1% qualified for a Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP) this figure in England rises to nearly 4% entitlement to the equivalent education and healthcare

[43] Department of Education and https://www.napier.ac.uk/-/media/worktribe/output-2867891/rallying-to-the-flag-a-consolidated-picture-of-armed-forces-childrens-education-in.ashx
[44] ibid

plan. The effects of this practical area of difference can have a profound impact on families, particularly in decisions about accompanied and unaccompanied postings.

Withdrawal from education – unlike England, parents require the prior permission of the education authority before they can withdraw a child from school. Failure to do so will render them liable to formal attendance procedures.

Safeguarding and child protection – there are differences in law, policy and procedure between Scotland and the rest of the UK.

School governance – nearly all[45] state schools in Scotland are funded and managed by local authorities. Confusingly, there is no equivalent of the "academies" as a model of governance in Scotland, despite the fact that many Scottish secondary schools are called "academy". The statutory model of parental engagement in the life of schools is therefore also different.

Taking these factors together, and depending on their circumstances and family context, Armed Forces children can face challenges in their learner journey when they either move to Scotland from the rest of the UK or move into another jurisdiction from Scotland. For children falling within the legal definitions of Additional Support Needs (ASN) these issues can be particularly acute. The importance of this for mobile children has been highlighted in research by the Education Policy Institute[46] who point out that these matters will be exacerbated in the future as a consequence of Devolution.

In 2020, the UK Ministry of Defence published "Living in Our Shoes: Understanding the Needs of UK Armed Forces Families" also known as the Selous Report (Selous, Walker and Misca, 2020). The recommendations in this extremely comprehensive review were largely, but not completely, accepted by the Scottish Government. Two are most relevant to this discussion recommendation 22 and 25. The former stated that the Department for Education, the Devolved Governments, and the MOD *"prioritise more detailed, robust research into Service children's academic choices, attainment levels, educational outcomes and career progression, and explore the factors which might hinder educational outcomes."* This recommendation sets a clear and concise agenda for research activity, placing the emphasis specifically on

[45] There is one mainstream school and a small number of special schools that are funded by direct grant from the Scottish Government.

[46] [46]"A comparison of school institutions and policies across the UK", Sibieta L and Jerrim J, April 2021, Education Policy Institute.

educational outcomes. Allied to this recommendation was recommendation 25 aimed at facilitating research "*to ensure that all children with a parent in the military are identifiable with a marker that enables them to be tracked throughout their education between different schools and education systems, and that their educational outcomes are reported at all Key Stages, alongside destination data.*"

Likewise, the Angela Morgan Report provided a comprehensive review into ASN provision. Significantly, stakeholders in Armed Forces children contributed directly to that review. Now superseded by an action plan supported by regular updates (Scottish Government, 2022b) this promotes involvement and engagement of children and young people, parents, and carers; Promotes the professional and career development of all professionals working in the area of ASN provision; and requests a clarification of relevant outcomes and measurable for children and young people with ASN.

It should also be recognised and understood that although the Scottish Government formally acknowledges the challenges potentially faced by Armed Forces children[47], but unlike almost all other groups facing challenges in learning, they do not collect any data on this group. There is therefore no analysis by the Scottish Government of the pattern, or nature, of needs other than that undertaken at present by the ADES NEO. This observation is even truer for the children of service leavers who are presently considered simply as a sub-set of Armed Forces children as a whole and whose specific needs are therefore completely unknown. The above highlights there is also a need for organised uniform data gathering and analysis within the Scottish education system.

[47] Page 11upporting Children's Learning: Statutory Guidance on the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Scotland Act 2004 (as amended) Code of Practice (Third Edition), Scottish Government, 2017

6.6.2 Further and Higher Education

In our interview with the Higher Education Further Education (HE: FE) Veterans Champion Group we learned of the consecutive establishment of a champion network of all further and higher education establishments across Scotland who have worked together to develop education pathways for veterans across these domains. This network now known as ADVANCE has the aim of promoting education as a viable option to the Armed Forces community. The University of Strathclyde has developed an articulation route which will allow those with a Higher National Diploma (HND) qualification to enter initial teacher qualification training. This is a major step forward in promoting opportunities for further and higher education in Service leavers and their families in Scotland. Later in this report we will learn of the significant funding challenges facing this group and their families in terms of further and higher education applications. We will also make several suggestions as to how the Welfare Centres on bases may prove to be an ideal setting to enhance education opportunities.

In 2022 on the back of the development of the Centre for Military Research, Education and Public Engagement at Edinburgh Napier University (CMREPE ENU) and with funding from the Veterans Foundation, a Scottish Military Research Network (Hub) now called Scottish Armed Forces Evidence & Research (SAFE&R) was established bringing together all universities in

Scotland with NHS providers and key third sector groups to develop substantial research activity related to all the key areas identified in the Armed Forces Covenant. The ability of this alliance to share resources and to develop strong research teams with a focus on specific aspects of the Covenant should not be underestimated. There is a real opportunity for Scottish Government and other key stakeholders to now work directly with all the Scottish research arena.

The pattern that began to emerge from the key stakeholder data was the high level of partnership working across the Scottish systems. Support for the military covenant is evident across the Scottish Government, all the 32 councils, a high number of businesses and the education sector. Below we discuss health provision which also functions under a similar model.

6.7 Health

We are aware The Armed Forces 3rd Sector Resilience Fund allocated £180k this year and to Support Mental Health £1.4m allocated to Combat Stress and Veterans 1st Point in March 2022. We also acknowledge the ongoing work to develop a GP accreditation scheme for veterans in Scotland through the Armed Forces Personnel & Veterans Health Joint Group and

Veterans Scotland and the Scottish Veterans Care Network Mental Health and Wellbeing Alliance group.

A similar pattern of partnership working emerged from our data related to the mental health and Wellbeing of Veterans in Scotland**.** Stakeholder interview was conducted with NHS, Erskine, and several key charities supporting veteran's mental health in Scotland. The Alliance is working across the whole of Scotland bringing together 19 funded partners to provide a diverse range of services and support to Veterans and their families. The Alliance partners constitute a powerful multidisciplinary team, who between them represent all the key skills and interventions necessary to deliver a positive evidence-based care package to meet the needs of vulnerable veterans and their families. It is recognised that addressing health issues involves adopting a holistic approach to service design and provision and is not always attainable in standard primary and secondary care.

It is harder for veterans with mental health difficulties to build healthy social networks, find meaningful roles, and achieve well-being and a strong sense of self. Like other people facing exclusion, they may wish to work to change mainstream society even as they move towards it. This has informed the construction of the Scottish Veterans Wellbeing Alliance, which is all about connecting trusted and safe spaces which are already part of the veteran landscape; using different spaces which have benefited other communities of interest and identity; and creating new places in which veterans can connect. The focus is on social prescribing interventions that form part of a holistic pathway to extend into and reach out from the current and those developing community and residential veterans' mental health services across Scotland.

The willingness to engage in partnership working was also evident with links to well-established groups and centres such as such as Erskine the Veterans Scotland Health and Wellbeing Pillar Group, the network of Veterans Champions and the newly established Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Implementation Board which was developed in response to a recommendation in the 2018 Scottish Veterans Commissioner (SVC) Report on Veterans' Health and Wellbeing. Scottish Veterans Mental Health Action Plan Implementation Group.

Interviews were also conducted with the Services Family Federations in Scotland. Because of the nature of the roles, and the fact that the majority were not based in Scotland, it was quite difficult to elicit information directly related to Scotland. Nonetheless, we established that there is support for key areas such as – housing, health, education and childcare, employment and training, and support of foreign and commonwealth personnel. Interestingly we did establish that support and information are available for the partners but that Service personnel were advised to use the support of the Welfare Centres in their respective units. There was no evidence of partnership or working across these federations.

6.8 Summary

Our interviews with Key Stakeholders provided us with overwhelming evidence of both a willingness to engage in, and evidence of partnership working models in Scotland. Moreover, it demonstrates the solid support for veterans in Scotland, starting at the top with the Scottish Government, which appointed the UK's first Veterans' Commissioner in 2014[48]. Along with the other governments of the United Kingdom, Scotland launched the Strategy for Our Veterans in November 2018 and published their refreshed action plan this year setting out a vision, principles, and various aims to support veterans and their families'.[49]

This ethos of partnership working is now evident across all local authorities. Skills and qualification mapping has developed to the point that potential veterans can now translate the skills and qualifications they have amassed during their career into a CV which is understood by those within the wider community. However, there is still much work to be done to provide accurate, uniform and up to date data to understand and support the learning journey of the young people of Armed Forces and veteran families. Employment events to promote the employment of veterans are developing well, and the opportunities available to gain meaningful employment for this group is growing, as are the number of events.

We have established how this approach has harnessed resources, promoted shared training, and demonstrated creativity. In terms of educational pathways, the work of ADVANCE in the FE: HE network is developing new education pathways, and the presence of a Veterans'

[48] The third Scottish Veterans Commissioner was appointed in 2022.
[49] strategy-veterans-taking-strategy-forward-scotland-refreshed-action-plan.pdf

Champion across all sites is creating the type of network necessary to support mobile learners in later years. The CMREPE ENU centre and the newly established Scotland University Military Research Network is continuing to maintain and grow the partnership model approach.

Having established the key support systems, we now move on to report on the perspectives of those who have experienced some of these services in Chapter 7.

7 Qualitative Data Analysis

7.1 Introduction

This chapter we will present the outcomes of our qualitative data analysis. Themes from the surveys were used to form the agenda for some of the subsequent interviews with a purposive sample from these groups. The data collection was carried out across three phases. The previous chapter presented the outcomes from phase one of the qualitative data collection which related to the key stakeholders. In this chapter we focus on the second phase related to veterans, Service personnel, and their spouses/partners. Several opportunities for participant observation were conducted during this stage. Finally, phase three involved validation of our findings across four geographical group settings throughout Scotland.

Fig 53 below provides an overview of the number of responses to each of the data collection techniques. The findings are presented following the sequential nature of the data collection with each stage built on the last and responded to key issues which emerged.

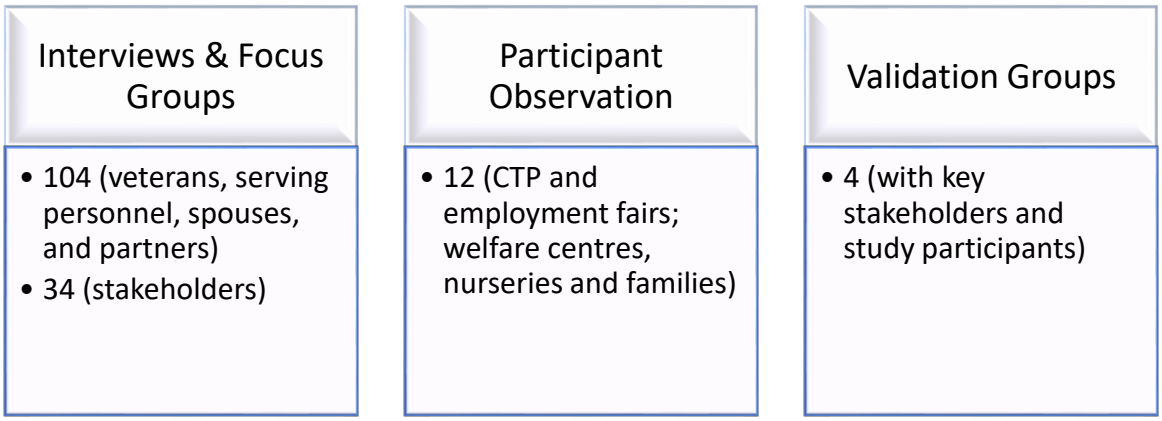


Figure 53: Qualitative Data Response Rate

7.2 Realist Evaluation

When summarising the results of a realist evaluation of data, it is helpful to address the following questions:

What are the most common interventions mentioned in the data?

The most common *interventions* mentioned in the interview data included CTP activities such as CV workshops and mock interviews, learning credits, networking events (both military and

civilian), support from the Commanding Officer, informal communication with fellow veterans/partners, social media, joining the Reserves, and deployment in the last months of transition.

What are the most common positive and negative outcomes mentioned in the data?

Both positive and negative *outcomes* were identified across the interview data, and it is worth noting that outcomes may also be reported as mechanisms elsewhere in the data. Most frequently these related to employment, housing, and education. Positive outcomes included: successful acculturation/acclimatisation into the local community, gaining employment, improved mental health, restored sense of comradeship, less need for formal support post-transition, successful employment experiences for managers, effective social networks, and successful networking pre- and post-exit. Negative outcomes included: undervaluing of skills, difficulties in settling into the local community, lack of successful networking, difficulties finding accommodation, feelings of isolation/abandonment, perception of devaluing once exited, strain on relationships, low uptake of learning credits, and lack of access to resources.

What are the most common contexts in which outcomes have been reported?

We identified *contexts* at the personal, interpersonal, and organisational level. Whilst most interviewees were veterans, the identification of more nuanced contexts enables a more accurate picture of the transition experience. This includes the pre- and post-transition context, personnel of different ranks, personnel with partners/children, families of veterans, whether a partner is military or civilian, veterans in custody, and location of resettlement.

These contexts are noteworthy with respect to intervention or outcome. For example, those at higher rank or in more specialist roles may report difficulty being released to prepare for transition, due to work pressures and lack of available cover. Those with school-age children have often made the decision about resettlement location before transitioning, to provide stability for the family unit, and often will already have purchased property. This removes one of the common 'burdens' of transition decision-making as it is already addressed. In turn, the family is consequently directly affected by the process of transition; whilst the individual is undergoing transition out of the forces, the family are also undergoing a transition process,

and the two considerations cannot be separated. This is also true with respect to relocation of personnel during service.

Service personnel and their families living in Service Family Accommodation (SFA) in Scotland may not be eligible for SAAS[50] funding unless they – or the family member who is applying – were resident in Scotland when they joined the Armed Forces. Service personnel who do not live in SFA may experience greater ease in integrating into the community in which they already live. Other contexts may or may not have been significant with respect to outcome, but were not reported in the interview data, such as gender and ethnicity.

What are the most common mechanisms through which interventions have worked?

It is helpful here to bear in mind that *mechanisms* rather than interventions produce outcomes, whether positive or negative. A particular resource may be very well-designed, but if it is not accessible at the right time and in the right way then its effectiveness may be limited. Table 6 below lists the positive mechanisms that were identified from the data.

Table 6: Positive mechanisms that were identified from the data

Successful bridging between military and civilian life
Being given opportunity to focus on preparing for transition (e.g., finding accommodation, going to workshops)
Preserving a sense of identity, belonging, and/or comradeship
Having the opportunity to connect with those who have been in the same environment
Effective sharing of information
Having good accessibility of resources e.g., online portals
Increased confidence in knowing what is expected/needed/coming next
Providing a sense of structure/stability
Proactive follow up post discharge
Enablement of similar values/behaviours (e.g., discipline, sense of duty, wearing a uniform)

Negative mechanisms (Table 7 below) were also identified which led largely (but not always) to negative outcomes, and these did not necessarily mirror the positive mechanisms noted.

[50] Student Award Agency Scotland

Table 7: Negative mechanisms

Lack of proactive contact
Perception of devalue from force perspective once transitioning/discharged
Lack of encouragement to share experiences/vulnerability whilst serving
Feelings of confusion due to the wealth of information available in different places
Lack of financial stability
Lack of similar values in the community/workplace
Reluctance of different ranks to mingle with peers (partners too)
Perceived lack of value
Lack of comradeship
Failure to meet needs/expectations
Overwhelming amount of information
Not being in a position to make decisions
Unknown unknowns (i.e., lack of understanding of where gaps lie in knowledge/information)
Lack of ability of others to understand life outside forces (e.g., civilian partner or military mock interviewer)
Restrictions on use of learning credits/lack of clarity in how to use them

How many key Context Mechanism Outcome (CMO) configurations were identified across interview transcripts?

Across the transcripts, 146 separate CMO or partial-CMO configurations were identified. A number of these were considered 'outliers' as they were specific to an individual or situation, but the majority were either the same or very similar to each other, differing sometimes in context or in the intervention to which the CMO applied. These conflated CMO configurations fall into five broad themes which are expanded upon below, with examples of the CMO configurations in blue. It is interesting to note that the most frequently occurring themes here are applicable at all levels (personal, interpersonal, and organisational).

7.2.1 Time and Timing

This was by far the most frequently reported theme in the data; it existed in several contexts and led to both positive and negative outcomes. This was most frequently framed at organisational level from the perspective of the interviewee, in terms of mechanisms that led to positive or negative outcomes, such as having a supportive Commanding Officer (positive) or being deployed within a few months of exit (negative). It could also be framed at personal level e.g., the 'just in time' mind-set leading to last-minute preparation for transition.

The chief mechanism here concerns the enablement of time and the timing of the resources and measures available to the individual. Support from the Commanding Officer and the unit was considered invaluable at this stage:

Having a supportive CO aid greatly in transition (O) via being given sufficient time and opportunity to prioritise preparing for it (M) e.g. using the online portal.

For Service personnel going through the transition process, having protected time and 'headspace' to prepare for transition leads to a smoother transition process, better preparedness, greater uptake of resources such as CTWs, and more accurate expectations.

Having time and opportunity to 'read' the labour market (M) leads to less likelihood of undervaluing skills or simply "going for the first job out there" (O).

Even having a supportive Commanding Officer, however, the reality for some personnel – particularly those in higher ranks or more specialist roles – could mean that the intended time did not materialise.

Responsibility for the job in the last months of service can mean getting time to look for employment, housing etc. can be hampered by lack of available cover, especially if at a higher rank.

For all personnel, deployment within the last few months leading up to discharge was a significant barrier. This could be exacerbated by the 'just in time' culture prevalent in the forces which could lead to the individual doing things at the last minute, even if adequate time was in fact available. Whilst several existing pre-transition resources were considered valuable, especially CV workshops and learning credits, these were limited in effectiveness if adequate opportunity was not available to use them.

For medical discharges, the timing of these resources was particularly significant as they were often available at a time when they could not be taken advantage of, and when the individual had not anticipated leaving the service and therefore was not prepared for it emotionally. Key insights into the accounts of those medically discharged have been included in our deep dive on Medical Discharge. Timing could also be an issue for personnel required to give 12 months'

notice of leaving (such as in the RAF), since this meant that applying for jobs could not be done until near the time of discharge.

The issue of time and focus is not restricted to Service leavers. For their partners, this manifested most frequently as the balance between childcare responsibilities, work, and study, and was also true of relocation during service as well as transition out of the forces. For those with school-age children, finding work to fit around school hours and the unpredictable working patterns of their partner was an additional challenge. This is discussed in further detail in our Moray Case Study (Section 7.10).

Often there was little time to adapt to the new environment and take care of initial needs (such as registering for local services and finding out what support networks were available). Partners identified a need for an 'information pack' which could be used when relocating or transitioning to facilitate quicker settlement into the new location. We discuss support necessities and constraints in greater detail in Focus Group 4.

Conversely, it was also noted that many veterans with children had already purchased property pre-transition (due to the need to provide stability for their families), and this removed the burden of choosing a location and finding appropriate accommodation at the point of discharge. For those with partners and those with families, choice of location post-exit was largely driven by either this or by an agreement previously made with their partner during service. Many in this category had already purchased houses when children were at a pivotal point in education and needed to be in one place. For some of the RAF personnel we interviewed this situation was slightly different, as they were not living in SFA on base before transition.

7.2.2 Values and Behaviours

Somewhat unsurprisingly, veterans reported 'gravitating' towards jobs which mirrored the values and behaviours that were important to them whilst in the military; characteristics such as structure, discipline, and duty were highly valued.

Jobs with similar features to those experienced in the forces e.g., uniform, discipline, sense of duty (M) help veterans (C) to settle more easily (O).

Some veterans saw this as a 'soft' transition, building a bridge between their military and civilian life, and allowing them time to adjust to their new environment whilst still reinforcing some of the characteristics of the military one. Joining the Reserves was considered by some to produce a similar outcome via the same mechanism. For a smaller number, going into full-time education was likewise considered something of a 'soft' transition if they were in a position to do so, providing a structure, timetable and set expectations that allowed them to spend time outside study building networks for future employment.

Where individuals struggled to settle, this was often due to a perceived mismatch in values or standards held. It could apply to employment or to the environment in which the individual settled post-transition. Veterans also reported difficulty in interacting with civilian colleagues who they perceived did not hold these values or did not work to the standard the veteran normally expected to provide themselves.

Some veterans relocated again after transition to be in a community – often a smaller or more rural one – where they felt their values and standards were more well-matched or well-received.

Perceived lack of similar values in the community (M) leads to more difficulty resettling (O), even if family and friends are nearby.

For veterans of all forces, a sense of comradeship and camaraderie was reported as being a vital component of successful transition. Those who were in touch with fellow veterans reported a preserved sense of identity and sense of belonging that they felt would otherwise be lacking. Joining the Reserves led to this same sense of belonging and comradeship and improved mental health.

Regular, informal communication with fellow veterans' post-transition was beneficial to help restore this sense of camaraderie and bonding and provide opportunities to talk about unique experiences with others who had been in the same environment. This was consistent whether

the contact was in person or online and could even be effective if instigated several years post-transition. This type of informal connection could also help lessen the need for more formal support post-transition, although it is worth noting that this may also be due to a reluctance on the part of the veteran to step outside their comfort zone.

Lack of comradeship in the employment environment could make settling more difficult, and some veterans reported moving jobs several times as a result. Conversely, the values and attitudes gained in the forces could also lead to successful employment experiences for managers.

7.2.3 Comfort Zones

For veterans and civilians alike, leaving a particular lifestyle and transitioning to a new one inevitably involves stepping outside their comfort zone. For a veteran, the choice of accommodation or employment post-discharge was often heavily influenced in this regard, and many veterans made reference to their 'institutionalisation' as having had a significant effect on their ability to prepare, settle, make choices, and adapt to life going forward. Most veterans would not consider their time in the forces to be merely a job. *"People talk about a career, you know, a job. No, it's not. It's a life".*

This was mostly reported at personal or interpersonal level, although some mechanisms reported at organisational level have had a significant impact on the outcome. Whilst the aforementioned sense of camaraderie can help here, it does not necessarily translate into successful integration into civilian life, nor indeed into successful preparation for transition. For example, networking events designed to help cultivate contacts for future employment can be less effective due to reluctance of personnel of different ranks to mingle with each other:

Successful networking at CTW (O) can be hampered by reluctance of different ranks to mingle as peers (M), especially given the relatively short length of workshops.

Officers tended to report less of a problem in this regard, due to the extra resources available to them such as the Officers' Association Scotland. However, this hierarchical hindrance also applied to civilian partners of personnel, whose ability to form networks at social events could

be impacted by perceptions of the rank of their partner. This is discussed in greater detail in our deep dive – Focus Group 1 – Young Partners.

Another frequently reported issue here related to the reluctance of personnel to be proactive in asking for help or in opening up, especially to a military colleague: *"Follow-up post-transition is less likely to elicit 'honest' answers if the enquirer is military, due to perceived lack of empathy and reluctance of veteran to reveal perceived vulnerability".*

This was felt to be exacerbated by the pervading culture in the service to the extent that even when it is known that support/resources are available, they may not be made use of unless the individual who needs them is approached. Pre-transition, this could mean that full use was not made of the resources available:
CTP was not effective (O) when the contact officer was not physically present on base (M) – leads to lack of uptake (O)

This issue was reported widely both pre-transition and post-transition, and by Service personnel and their partners, veterans, those who had been medically discharged, and veterans in custody, highlighting the need not only for appropriate and proactive signposting to support services but also for having the right people in place to offer support. For those who had not planned their transition, such as those who had been medically discharged and veterans in custody, feelings of shame exacerbated the problem, and made them less likely to mingle with veterans where such networks were available to them.

7.2.4 Engagement

Whilst it is clear that valuable resources and support exist both pre- and post-transition, it is also known that engagement with these resources is not always effective. Pre-transition, concerns about retention or expectations of the process can mean that CTP staff officers don't engage with transitioning Service personnel during key periods in transition, leading to a perceived lack of support from the perspective of the transitioning individual.

Many veterans reported that they felt overwhelmed with information during the transition process, and that it was difficult to engage with all the material available. By far the most

common recommendation from veterans was to have a more individualised approach to the transition process, to allow the individual to understand more accurately their needs, responsibilities, and opportunities, to be more strategic in their approach to preparation, and to make optimal use of their limited time.

For veterans pre-transition (C), an equitable approach to the transition process would enable resources to be placed where they are most needed, avoid waste (M), and lead to greater proportion of successful transitions (O)

Having the opportunity to ask questions, rather than being given so much information, and including partners in the discussion, would also lead to more confidence in preparedness for key aspects of transition such as housing, finance, healthcare, and education. For those who are medically discharged, this is particularly important since they may not be in a position themselves to engage with the process effectively.

CV workshops and learning credits were the most frequently cited resources by both veterans and those preparing for transition. CV workshops were highly valued, particularly by veterans who transitioned in more recent years, because they enabled the translation of skills and attributes gained in the military into civilian life – providing another 'bridge' between the two.

Having access to resources that help translate skills into civilian equivalents (M) leads to increased feelings of preparedness and confidence to deal with civilian life (O).

Any resource which had this characteristic was considered worthwhile, as many veterans had not had civilian jobs prior to enlisting and did not know what was required. Opinion amongst those who transitioned longer ago was more mixed, with some noting that this characteristic was noticeably missing, and that their first attempts at securing employment were unsuccessful as a result. Nonetheless, it is encouraging to see that this situation appears to have improved considerably. The picture around the usefulness of Learning Credits is less clear. A minority of interviewees reported having fully engaged with all the credits available to them and found that it was helpful both in deciding what they wanted and did not want to do post-discharge. For many, however, this was not the case, either due to lack of opportunity or limitations on their use:

For planned transitions (C), restrictions on use of learning credits, and lack of clarity around how to use them (M), leads to perceived lack of value in the resource and lower uptake (O).

For unplanned transitions, Learning Credits were even less well-accessed. Although it was generally understood that for medical discharges, Learning Credits could also be used by the partner/spouse, this was not always relevant, particularly if the partner did not have opportunity to use them within the time available or was in an unrelated profession or trade. These veterans suggested that it would be more effective to enable an environment where the veteran themselves could make use of the credits at the appropriate time.

Whilst it was also suggested by veterans undergoing planned transitions that their Learning Credits could have been more usefully taken up by their partner pre-transition, this was not always the case, since it may not be helpful to partners with children who find it difficult to balance childcare, the need to work to provide money for childcare, and opportunities to study/upskill for potential employment. Effectively, having protected time to use Learning Credits is something that would be useful to both personnel and their partners, and having time to sit and think/plan could lead to more effective use of these credits. Post-transition, it was acknowledged by veterans that there were a lot of support resources available in the form of local and national charities; however, engagement with these was sometimes hampered not only by reluctance to ask for help, but also by difficulties in navigating the sheer amount of information available, which could also be difficult to locate. Informal conversations with fellow veterans were sometimes helpful here, but those veterans who had not received follow-up contact post-discharge stated that this would have been helpful in starting to navigate what was both available and relevant. It should also be noted that in some contexts, lack of engagement with resources was due to the resource not being available.

7.2.5 Expectations and Decision-making

For the majority of veterans reporting a positive transition experience, this was largely due to having accurate expectations of the transition process and of life in the outside world. Having a clear view of the transition process as it applied to them as individuals, alongside adequate preparedness, gave increased confidence and a sense of stability and 'direction of travel'.

Not living in Service provided accommodation (either SLA or SFA) during service (for whatever reason) enabled a smoother integration with the local community and meant that expectations were usually met in that regard, although for some veterans who resettled in home towns they had not lived in since their teenage years, this was not always the case once they had fully transitioned.

Experience of civilian life pre-transition eases transition (O) by giving confidence in knowing what is needed and knowledge of e.g., rental sector (M). Lack of experience in terms of housing market can cause difficulties in transition and lead to increased stress (O).

Veterans reporting a more negative transition experience almost always mentioned a lack of follow-up once they were discharged and 'the door shut behind them', leading to feelings of devalue, loss of identity, and an increased sense of isolation. Many stated that they did not receive any contact at all and felt that they had been 'forgotten about'. This was also reported pre-transition, where some veterans reported that they felt devalued as soon as they had made the decision to leave. By far the most common suggestion from interviewees with negative transition experiences was to ensure adequate follow-up post-transition, even if in the form of a simple letter or phone call.

Veterans also reported mismatch in expectations due to not having adequate time to prepare, which is to be expected. Decision-making could be hampered by not enough information, too much information, or information given at the wrong time. It is interesting to note that many veterans reported a 'double transition'; that is to say, they transitioned out of the service and then relocated again sometime later. This was often reported as being due to a mismatch in expectations of what civilian life would be like (e.g., in a particular city or job or community), but could also be due to the habitual characteristic of the individual who was reposted every few years in the military, or to changes in circumstances, such as losing a partner.

Decision-making was often influenced by existing family circumstances. Expectations could also be difficult to navigate for partners and families of personnel, even whilst still in service. Frequent relocation and lack of adequate information beforehand could make decision-making difficult and could impact relationships. We explore the impact of frequent relocation in greater detail in Focus Group 1 – Young Partners.

For personnel preparing for transition, having a civilian partner could be beneficial as they were already familiar with 'life on the outside', and activities such as CV preparation could begin at an earlier stage in the process than would normally happen. Day-to-day responsibilities such as managing money and registering for healthcare were also made easier when the partner already had experience of them. Some veterans who transitioned alone reported a lack of preparedness for the day-to-day detail, with many not understanding what was required. This could be as simple as not realising they needed a TV licence, to not having the skills to maintain a budget and consequently falling into debt. Conversely, having a civilian partner could also lead to negative outcomes post-transition, when the feeling of missed camaraderie and comradeship was felt by the veteran particularly keenly:

Having a civilian partner (C) can lead to strain on relationship post-transition (O) due to lack of empathy with experiences (M)

Again, involving partners in the process at an early stage here was suggested by many as being helpful for both decision-making and wellbeing, and ensuring follow-up post-transition would help individuals to make sure they were aware of and addressing their responsibilities. For personnel preparing for transition, decision-making could be a particular challenge when considering 'unknown unknowns' i.e., being asked to make decisions about resettling when they are not yet familiar with what is available; nor with what they are capable of on the outside. CV workshops helped here by increasing understanding of the types of job and working environment that may be suited to the veteran. Again, the individualised approach was mentioned as the ideal.

Some of the CTP resources previously mentioned were reported as being less effective for personnel due to mismatch of expectations. For example, where mock-interview workshops were carried out by people still serving in the military, these were seen as being less valuable as the provider did not have an accurate idea of what was required for a civilian job interview, and the interviews were not competency-based. Here, having access to someone who had recently been through CTP, and had experience of working in a civilian environment, would be more valuable as they could relate to the transitioning personnel, they would have

credibility as a Service leaver who had successfully transitioned, and the Service leavers in transition could learn much from their experiences.

7.3 Summary

It is clear from the data that positive and negative experiences of transition occur across categories of Service leavers and their partners, and regardless of their branch of service. Having adequate time and opportunity to focus on preparing for transition was the single most important factor identified by veterans pre-transition, and where this was enabled, the transition experience was a positive one. Lack of information in an appropriate form was a barrier to effective transition, whether by personnel preparing to leave, veterans navigating civilian life for the first time, or partners navigating the difficulties of repeated relocation during service.

Valuable pre-transition resources were characterised by their ability to form bridges between military and civilian life. However, these are not always available, especially if the transition is unplanned. Involving families in the process both pre- and post-transition aids information flow and decision-making. Reluctance to step out of comfort zones could hinder preparation for transition, settlement in new environments, and access to help and support. Other negative experiences post-transition generally related to lack of expected follow-up and differences in expectations once in civilian life. This often led to a second 'transition' to a different environment, sometime after initially transitioning out of the military.

Positive post-transition experiences were characterised by maintenance of identity, sense of belonging, and comradeship, and by environments which helped maintain the values and discipline learned during service. Whether or not follow-up had been maintained, veterans found their own ways of maintaining these by both formal means (e.g., via type of employment), or informal means (such as social networks), which could be effective even when initiated a long time after leaving service. Despite this, there was still a marked reluctance to take the initiative when it came to seeking help or support, although for many there was an awareness of its availability.

Both veterans and their partners described the ideal of a less utilitarian and more individualised process, where a consistent approach is applied across the services, but which involves a more targeted element of execution both pre and post-transition; this could optimise the resources available at the right time and where they are most valuable. When examining the interview data and triangulating with participant observation and other data, several themes arose which are worthy of more detailed attention. These 'deep dives' are addressed next.

7.4 Deep Dives/Case Studies

In the previous section our realist evaluation identified key areas where further investigation would add to the study. This and feedback from the Advisory Board prompted areas for further exploration. These are presented below.

7.4.1 Families

In the introduction section of the UK Armed Forces Family Strategy (UKAFF) (2022-32) Keith Brown MSP (Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans, Scottish Government) reiterated the Scottish Government's firm commitment to the Armed Forces and their families, stating:

"Service families are a true asset, and it is right that we as a nation – government, charities, business and the wider public – support and empower them. We fully support the development of the families' strategy and its aims to improve outcomes for service families to enable them to live satisfied, safe, and fulfilling lives."

The purpose of the UKAFF Strategy is twofold: "*to inspire partnership working across the UK, honouring the enduring pledge of the Armed Forces Covenant; and to provide direction to policy makers, the single Services and public service providers to empower Armed Forces families to live rich and fulfilling lives alongside their loved ones"*[51]. Our stakeholder data have highlighted the strong partnership ethos evident across the support services in Scotland within the 32 councils and across many of the key stakeholders and the third sector. The emphasis the strategy places on considering the needs of the families of Service personnel in the development and application of policies which impact their lives is highly relevant to this section of our report, where in-depth investigation with Armed Forces spouses/partners[52] has highlighted several key areas. If addressed, these could make a substantial change to the current status of that group.

We conducted five participant observation/focus group events with Forces partners across various services in Scotland. Recognising that mobility, deployment and separation have a unique impact on different families, we chose to spend time with different groups such as young partners, mature partners, and a group of Commonwealth partners, so that individual circumstances were accurately captured. Aware of childcare commitments, we worked with the Welfare Centres to access the younger partner groups. We asked to join established coffee morning events attended by mothers and babies, to capture their views. Most of the meetings we attended were in Welfare Centres; some based 'behind the wire', and others located nearby. As our study progressed, we understood that nursery provision was emerging as a key issue, and so we used these opportunities to observe the base nursey provision and later to explore the issues in more detail with Moray Council.

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51 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1048269/UK_Armed_Forces_Families_Strategy_2022_to_2032.pdf

52 For convenience, we will refer to spouses/partners as 'partners' moving forward.

Data from these discussions suggest that numerous factors – such as the impact of mobility – impede the ability of Forces partners to develop their own career or to maintain employment to support family income. Often, the responsibilities of the partner also include accessing suitable schooling for children, supporting children with special needs, arranging access to local healthcare and transfer of health records when relocating. When personnel are deployed, despite support services, many partners reported feeling like 'lone' parents, lacking support from their wider families and any opportunity for respite. While access to childcare was sometimes available, the cost and availability of services tended to outweigh the potential for employment and further development for most partners. This was primarily because Forces families were subjected to the same fee system as the rest of the community, despite in many cases personnel being deployed and therefore the lack of a second parent to share childcare responsibility.

7.4.2 Focus Group 1 – Young Partners

Within this group most of the partners had moved from England to Scotland and were living in provided accommodation. The mean age of the group was 22, and many were missing the support of the wider family, which might have been available to them had they been living at home. The focus group addressed the impact of relocation, the role of the Forces partner, the culture on bases, the perception of Welfare Centres, personal development (or the lack of it) and aspirations/understanding of the transition journey.

For all partners in the group, there was a clear acceptance that **relocation** was part and parcel of the Armed Forces lifestyle,

and an understanding this would not be the last time they had to move with their partner/family: *"So, sometimes, without being too corny about it, the wife took second place, and that's it, that was just the…I always believed that the spouses and the families don't get the recognition. They don't. They sacrifice a lot. She's given up…well, I moved from place to place, I'm in the same job. She moved, she has to find employment, you know. So, she has to make new friends, new job, you know, so she's sacrificed way more than I ever did. You know, I stayed with the same circle of friends, the same job. And like I say, the spouses just don't get the recognition they deserve."*

For those with **children**, on arrival in Scotland there were several key areas that had to be addressed immediately. These included finding school places for children, registering with a local GP and dentist, and organising the family home. In all cases, personnel were currently deployed overseas. We started the session by discussing accommodation and how the group had settled into the environment. One of the key points raised was the lack of any welcome from the community offered to new people when they moved to a particular accommodation area. There appeared to be a clear line between ranks, so much so that the partner of a sergeant would not mix with that of a lower rank. Sadly, this pattern was to emerge at all focus groups and forces but was most evident in the Army focus groups: *"The wives themselves can be very cliquey and the husbands rank is very important, it's ridiculous. When I first went to some of the groups with him there were people I knew and when I said hello would turn their backs on me".*

While this group had developed a good relationship, it had taken time and had happened by chance, in this case because they had young children. The view of the Welfare Centre was that it was there for when people were struggling, and consequently they were reluctant to engage with the support offered unless it was essential. This sense of pride and reluctance to ask for help was a common theme across interviews with Service personnel, veterans, and families: *"Traditions were common and followed like for example the CO's wife its quite traditional for the wife of someone that high up to be involved in the community, to organise things and make sure that the wives are looked after while their husbands are away. It's quite a traditional military thing. It's not a job description or anything like that but it means a great deal to the wives and when the right person is in that position it makes such a difference".*

It became apparent that all responsibility related to the home and its management was theirs. They spoke about the current housing provision and the problems with getting repairs done, and the difficulty of finding and registering with local healthcare providers. This group were closest to the local community, and integration with the community plays a key role on any transition journey. Most were interested in self-development and in employment, but recognised the difficulty of securing employment which would accommodate childcare provision. While the nursery could offer childcare until 5pm, this resource was often underused because school children finished at 3pm, and after-school care was both difficult to secure and often too expensive: *"There's lots of jobs, but the problem then becomes if you've got… So, the Army almost banks on one working household. So that when a man's on deployment or a woman's on deployment that other spouse is at home looking after the kids. I mean that's a really archaic way of looking at it. But when the guys are deployed for four months, five months, six months at a time, it's very difficult for the other person to have an actual normal job, because what do you do about childcare?"*

When asked about information on transition or deployment or other factors that have a direct impact on the family, the group reported that they were only informed about this through their serving partner. It was a source of great frustration to them because they felt that if they had more detail on what was required, they could play a much more active role in the process. Some (but not all) of the Welfare Centres, did hold briefing events around deployment to let the family know what was happening, but for the biggest transition event – the one out of the military and into civilian life – there was little information provided except to the serving partner. The partners saw themselves as '*the organising group',* and there were also examples of highly positive or intense support being provided through the partner groups.

7.4.3 Focus Group 2 – Established Partners

This group comprising partners of more high-ranking personnel reported greater use of private, or independent school education for their children. In contrast to state schools, independent schools include all activities within school hours and include them into the curriculum, which frees up parents to work during school hours and to spend meaningful time with their children when at home. In Scotland, Queen Victoria School is a popular choice, although it is a boarding school only, with no day pupils, and not every service family is comfortable with sending their children to boarding school, although there is financial support through the MOD's Continuity of Education (CEA) Scheme, which is available to all ranks. There are many other independent schools popular with service families in Scotland, many of them closer to the central belt, and most of which offer places for day pupils as well as boarders. For many service families, education provision, and continuity of education, particularly over periods of important exams, are big factors that influence choices about postings, buying a house instead of opting for SFA, and indeed leaving the military to settle in a good catchment area rather than be posted elsewhere at an inconvenient time for their children's education.

Several state schools finish school at 1pm on a Friday, when extracurricular activities could be integrated to make more effective use of time and schedules. It also emerged from our data that there were variations across Scotland in availability of suitably qualified childcare provision. The difference between Scotland and England with respect to nursery and child education impacts directly on mobile families. In England, nurseries are managed by Ofsted and in Scotland all nurseries have to be on the Care Commission Register. This can cause disparities in opportunity for trained individuals to take on formal childcare roles with their current qualifications, because of the length of training required and the availability of childcare services for their own children: *"I don't know if you're aware of the difference in Scotland versus England, there is an awful lot more legislation in Scotland around childminding. So that makes it actually very exclusive. It costs an awful lot of money to become a childminder in Scotland. And so, it makes it very restricting over who can actually do it and a lot of people go, well, is it worth my time because actually I'm only here for three years. I've already got the English qualifications, but I'm going to have to jump through all of these hoops to do it in Scotland."* Likewise, provision of extracurricular activities (e.g., Sports, Brownies, and Scouts) is not monitored by the Care Commission.

7.4.4 The Military Doll

Little research has been done into the use of a comfort cub or bear to support a child to deal with the grief and loss associated with a deployed parent. Often referred to as a 'physical pain' on the loss of a parents embrace, therapeutic teddy bears are now being used more with children who have lost parents through separation or death. The bears or dolls often have voice recordings or pictures of the missing parent. The activity at this Welfare Centre very much mirrored this thinking. As can be seen in fig above - the doll had a picture of the parent on the front. It was soft to the touch and about the size of a regular teddy bear. Observation of those children who had a bear suggested this was indeed to self-comforter. The doll was clearly precious and was held tightly throughout our visit. Evidence of wear and tear indicated its continued and long-term use. When we asked staff about the dolls they explained the demand was very high and that they were a significant form of 'comfort' for the Armed Forces child when parents were deployed. They represented a tangible aspect of the parent, and staff reported that children can be heard speaking to the doll*. "Any aspect of use that brings comfort is encouraged".*

The provision on base demonstrated a real commitment to parents and children. Most events were situated within the Welfare Centres to promote socialisation and use of resources. One notable example of good practice was the use of the military doll at the Penicuik nursery. During two periods of participant observation, researchers observed the interaction between the child and the military doll.

7.4.5 Focus Group 3 – Commonwealth Partners and Community

We had two opportunities to engage with the Fijian community: the first at a day of celebration 'behind the wire', and the second during a partners' focus group. Data were collected using participant observation and interviews at the first event and focus group discussion at the second.

The sense of community with this group was extremely strong, and there was an identified network of support made available to all new members. On one base there appeared to be little mixing with the rest of the base community, while in a second there was a clear integration between all home and Commonwealth communities. Despite the sense of community, this was a group that faced several different challenges. For the military personnel, it was the issue of maintaining their UK status and the cost of this process. The

partners felt well supported by the community and knew how to find out the information they needed to settle which was publicised using social media and their community website[53]. Spouses and partners of Service personnel moving to Scotland are signposted to the website for further community specific support and information. Within this group there was a much stronger drive for further education among the partners. At least 75% of the group they had attained their first degree prior to coming to the UK. Unfortunately, these qualifications were not recognised in the UK, and it was not possible for them to use them as the basis for further study or employment.

7.4.6 Qualifications

The issue of recognition of qualifications across deployment zones was one of concern, and highlighted the disadvantage faced by many of the Armed Forces personnel and their families in terms funding for further or higher education or employment: *"Because I still have to pay over £2000 to get red passports which does not include the other tests that comes with it. Top*

[53] https://www.maramaalliance.com/

it off my wife will need to do hers too. Our qualifications are not recognised here so it is hard for jobs".

We know that a high percentage of Armed Forces children do not qualify for relief from university tuition fees if their parents joined the Armed Forces at a location elsewhere in the UK, even if a parent was Scottish by birth and of permanent residence. Notably this rule applies both to partners and to the personnel themselves, during or following transition. Consequently, further and higher education is more expensive, sometimes prohibitively so, for a high proportion of those who choose to settle in Scotland. *"Well, I found that at college. Trying to put my son's application form in with him, it says, you must be resident in Scotland for three years. I mean like about with the education thing…well, you are Scottish for a start, alright, and the Army sent you around…oh, right, well, let's waive that three years thing. You are in Scotland now, you're settling in Scotland, your child should then be entitled to go to a Scottish education thing."*

Non-recognition of qualifications leaves the option of further training or not working during the resettlement period in Scotland. As articulated by an individual below: *"I've already got the English qualifications, but I'm going to have to jump through all of these hoops to do it in Scotland."*

7.4.7 Focus Group 4 – RAF and Army Partners

The fourth focus group was conducted with a sample of mature partners. This group were a mix of Army and Air Forces partners who had a very active committee. Of particular interest was the Facebook group which they had set up. This was reported as being well used, and extremely useful for general and more local information. *"It's everyone and you can just say, does anyone have information on doctors' surgeries or dental practices and the group will respond. Some wives take it upon themselves to post information or lists of NHS doctors surgeries that are accepting new patients. Our welfare also have their own Facebook page and the regiment also have one, both are posted on regularly."*

In this instance, the welfare sergeant was the husband of the committee chair. The quote below reports on how useful the link is to the smooth running of the service: *"The welfare*

sergeant is very active and constantly trying to do what he can to help people. But he also has a time limit, and he will say to you that's not something we can do. His wife is on the wives committee so there is an ease in conversations between the committee and the welfare. Because you have this sort of team so it's part of the community as well, it really helps. You know you can trust them; you know that they are supportive and can pass this confidence on to other partners".

In general, each Welfare Centre had their own strengths and limitations. Some of the interviews with partners indicated that the Welfare Centres were associated with real problems and should only be approached when there was a real need. For this group, some of whom did not have children they did not perceive the centres as a social setting. For others the Welfare Centre was a definite social setting used primarily by young mothers and children. Often used externally by a local nursing home this centre allowed for integration between the older and younger generations. We asked participants if educational and employment opportunities were conducted in the centres would this make a difference. Unanimously the participants agreed that would make a great difference as travel and childcare always prevented this type of activity. Some spoke about wanting to train as a child carer and others saw nurse and midwifery education as a career of choice. Despite this further education funding opportunities are often impeded. Fascinatingly on our third visit to a Welfare Centre we learned about the activities of the 'wives committee' and the entrepreneurial activity where partners were helped to set up small businesses supported by the 'hive'. These experiences led us to believe of that the Welfare Centres were in fact an area where much stronger investment and community participation from education and employment bodies could lead to much stronger career opportunities for the Armed Forces partner. There was no doubt that the wives had the potential to be a formidable group who were already demonstrating resilience in the lives they lived.

7.4.8 Veterans in Custody

Labelling theory suggests that identity is not just recognised by others but in fact created by it, occurring not only by the labels that are applied but in the reaction that happens as a consequence of those labels for both the individual and those who surround them. For

veterans who are in prison the application of the criminal record identify becomes the 'major status' in which all other identities are subsumed (Edkins, 2008). For the veteran the loss of a potentially hard-won title in exchanged for one that defines them by what they have done represents a major fall from grace that as yet is not fully understood in the research literature. Military veteran status is now associated with a variety of criminal justice outcomes and is becoming a diversity subject to be considered by both the criminal justice system and academia. Little research has been conducted on the experience of these groups while in prison. Review of the literature suggests most research has tended to focus on why veterans end up as part of the justice system.

Recognising the needs of veterans in custody, we approached the Scottish Prison Services who were extremely helpful in helping us to organise two days of data collection involving both veterans who were prison officers and veterans in custody. We conducted 2 focus groups and one interview with prison officers who were veterans and one with veterans in custody. This has given us a much deeper insight into the dynamics of this sometimes-difficult relationship, and into the perceptions of prisoners on the role that transition may have played with respect to their circumstances. We also were provided with an in-depth data set which gives a breakdown of overall statistics for all prisoners and a breakdown of the percentage of those who are veterans. Moreover, the data details information on the establishments across Scotland; a breakdown by forces; a record of those who were first time offenders; those who have returned to custody within 12 months of release; age range; and breakdown by sentence. In Scotland we have the highest population of veterans in prison when compared with UK wide statistics. As of January 2023, the estimates of current prison population in Scotland is 7366 of which 225 are veterans in custody. However, like most of the datasets reported, capturing veteran status is difficult because of the voluntary nature of disclosure. Fig 54 displays the number of veterans in custody across 14 establishments in Scotland.

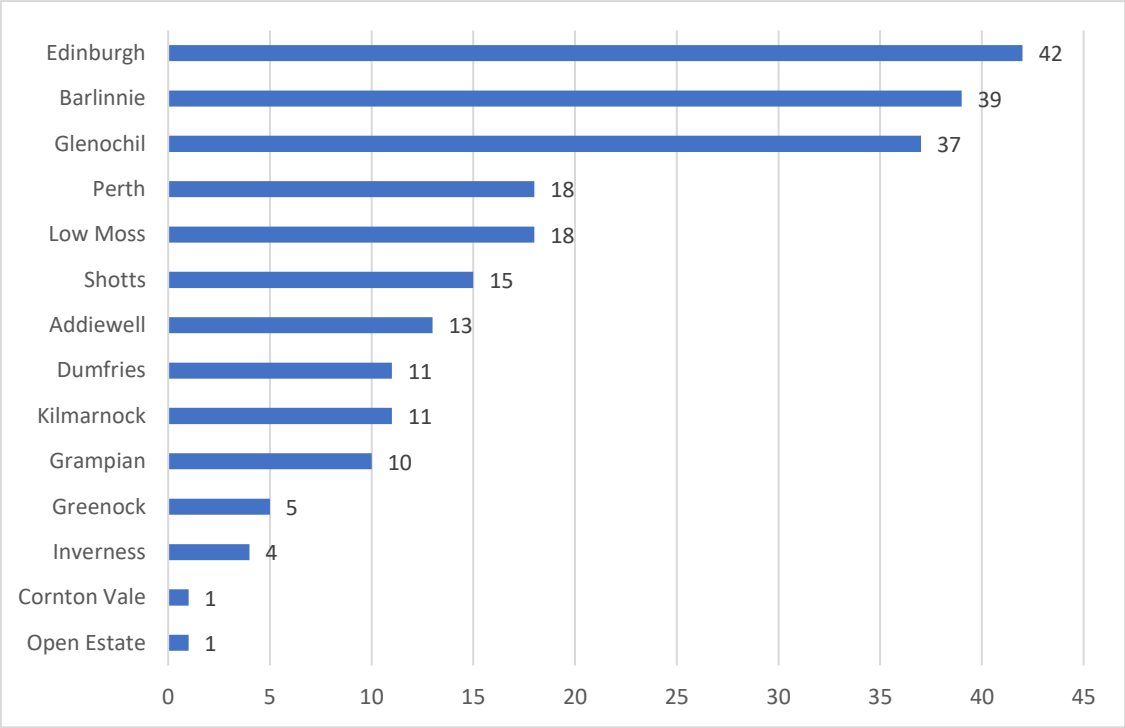

Figure 54: Establishments Across Scotland

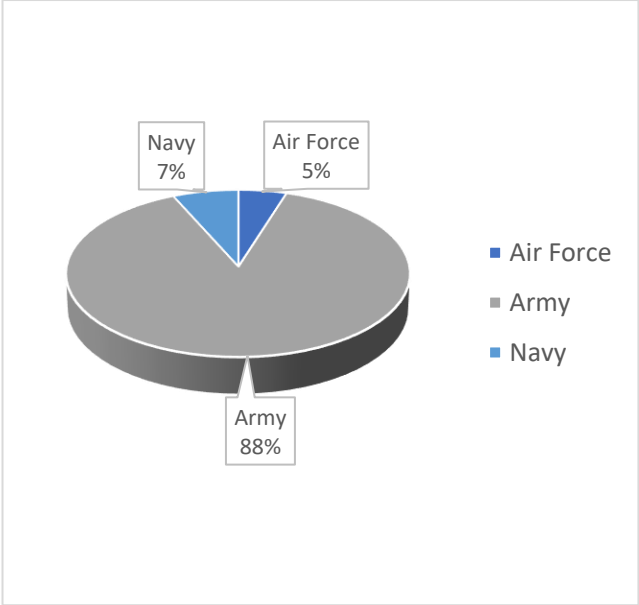

Figure 55: Breakdown of ViC by Service

Fig 55 depicts the percentage of Veterans in Custody across the Tri-services. Highest are those from the British Army (88%), followed by the Royal Navy (7%) and the Royal Air Force (5%).

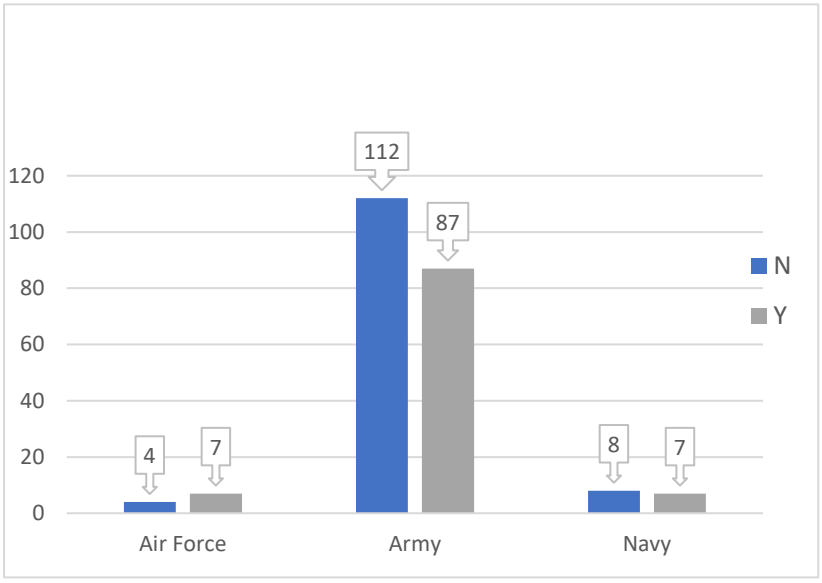

Figure 56: First Time in Custody

Although we have other data which provides a breakdown by establishment (Fig 54), for the purposes of this study we have chosen to provide a more generic account of the percentage of veterans in custody for the first time (blue) and those who were reoffenders (grey).

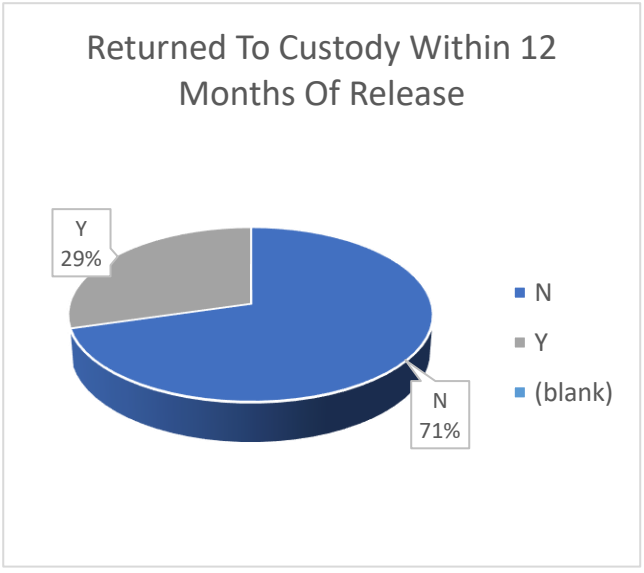

Figure 57: Percentage Returning to Custody

One of the issues raised in all interviews was the high level of return to custody. Fig 57 shows that of those released 29% of the population returned to custody within 12 months.

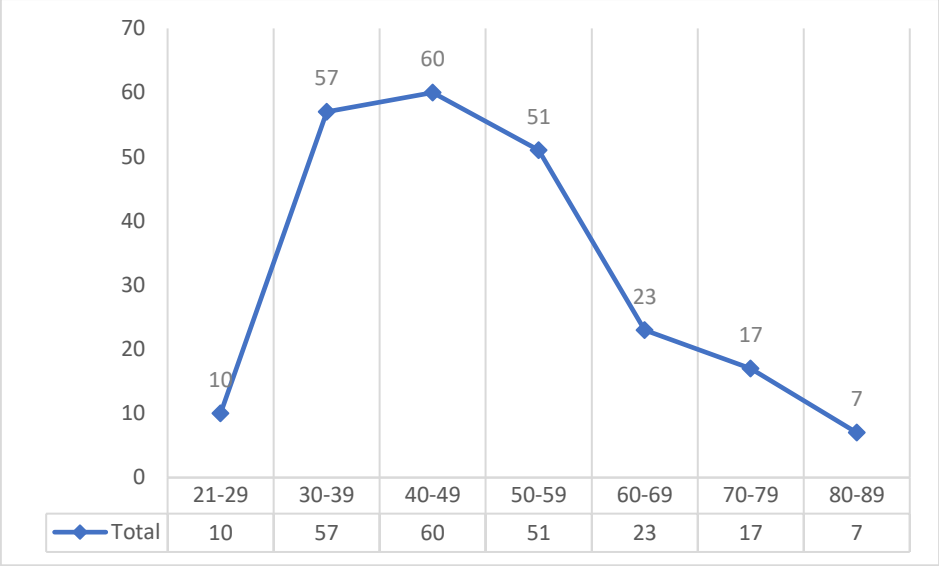

Figure 58: Age of ViC

Fig 58 above, provides an overview of the broad age range of ViC's. During our interviews it was also reported that there are a percentage of older veterans who die in prison, and who require long-term medical care for age-related illnesses.

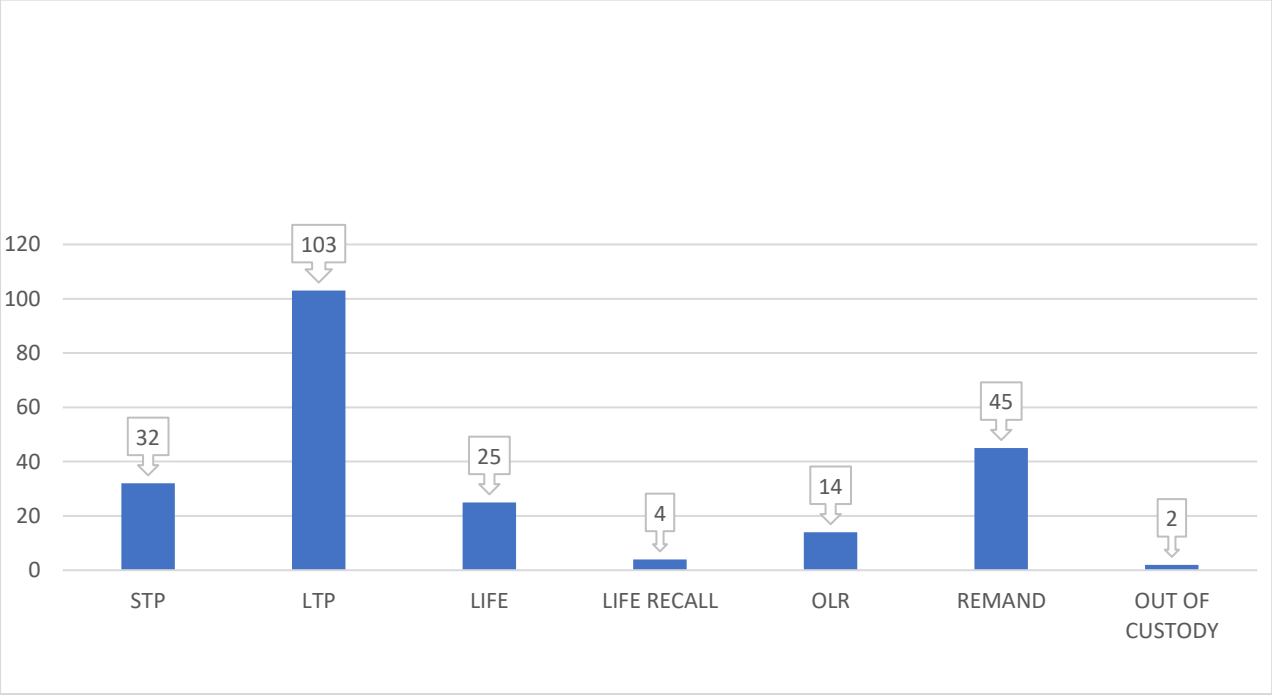

Figure 59: ViC by Sentence

- STP = Short-term Prison Sentence, LTP = long-term prison sentence (min of 4 years)
- Life recall but they were returned to custody for failing parole conditions
- OLR = order of all life restriction

The information in Fig 59 above provides an overview of the types of sentences. 103 ViC's are on long-term prison sentences ranging from a minimum of four years upwards. Those ViC's on life sentences may not have a release date.

7.4.8.1 Focus Groups with Veterans Who Were Prison Officers

The discussion began with an exploration into why the prison services was chosen as a second career. The majority reported that *'the structure of the prison service was similar to being in the forces'*. One added that the prison services offered employment that was non-regimental in style but still offered a structure that was like the unit he had worked in while in the forces.

When asked about their own transition experience we recognised they had left over 10 years age and so while valuable was not relevant to this study. However, it did give an insight into the lack of transition support available to them at that time and a way of comparing this to current service provision. All reported that '*Scottish Prison Services had a very positive view of the skills that veterans could bring to their service'.* They were made to feel valued during the interview process and the opportunity for progression through the service was evident from the start.

The focus groups with veterans who were also prison officers raised the question of how veterans caught up in the criminal justice system are perceived by fellow veterans who have the role of prison officer and how those perceptions are rallied in practice. The data above highlights that over 50% of the VIC's were there for sexual offences some of which were historic in nature with the older veteran group and would have been classed as an offence in military law. It was essential this group were segregated from the remainder of the prison population in many cases for their own protection. This impacted on the number of activities that they could support with the whole population for example on Memorial Day.

A second veteran in custody group identified were those who committed organised or force-with–force crimes. These were individuals who were involved in organised crime while in service. The needs of this group were quite different in that they could mingle with the general prison population and be a part of their recognised activities. A theme emerging from the discussion related to the '*inner turmoil experienced by veteran prison officers in the way in which they perceived VIC's'*. For many the '*title veteran is associated with a sense of pride'* and from their perspective many of the VIC's have failed to uphold the moral code they

associate with military service. Some went as far as to say that the title veteran should be *'stripped'* from this group who in their opinion *'had let down the principles of the veteran community.'* It is important to acknowledge that this was not a unanimous perspective but the fact that it has been raised suggests there is a question of how this might be addressed in future evaluation or research.

When asked about the support that was available for VIC's the group reported that the impact of Covid had meant that external support systems were severely curtailed. Specific to sexual offenders, external charities refuse to conduct sessions with this group. Internally almost all the establishments in Scotland have a veteran in custody officer. However, during the pandemic many of these services were minimised or were not provided.

7.4.8.2 Focus Group with Veterans in Custody

The focus group with the veterans in custody went on longer than anticipated but covered several areas worthy of note. Initially we had seven volunteers for the focus group, however, five withdrew before we arrived. At the beginning of the session, we confirmed the purpose for the meeting and reiterated that the nature of the incarceration was not within the remit of the study. In line with questions asked of all veteran groups the discussion began with questions around their roles in the forces and why they joined. We also asked about the circumstances around their discharge. For both participants they were the first from their family to join the forces. One in particular emphasised the need *to 'escape socioeconomic background'*. Both progressed through the ranks whilst in the military to a reasonably high level. For one it was a medical discharge while for the other it was an administrative discharge: *"None of my family has got military background and I could have done other things. I had decent qualifications in other things, but my dad said to me one time, have you ever considered the Forces? What Army? And I said, no. And, my opinion was, I could always go in, not like it, and come out. But if I didn't go in, I would never, I would always wonder, what if?"*

One participant spoke about his fight with mental health during deployment whilst in service and his unwillingness in asking for support so as not to let the team down. He spoke eloquently about the Army being so much more than a career it was his life as illustrated: "*So, you don't look for help. You just think, you just push it aside. You get on with it… If I could get help, I'd have got help and stayed in because I had a whole plan. I loved the Army, absolutely*

loved it… People talk about a career, you know, a job. No, it's not. It's a life. That's, that there is your life".

As with other veterans who spoke about medical discharge in the study this participant felt that he was shaped by the Army who had given him a new identity but when he was not functioning to full capacity this was overlooked: *"They have made me the way they want me. So, if I'm not right and they can see I'm not right, they should be identifying that. I was, I was a soldier on a brilliant path. I mean, like I said, I moved my life, and I gave it everything. And then all of a sudden, I stopped giving it everything. Now that should have been noticed, and it just isn't."*

Both were able to reflect on how they ended up where they were albeit they did not see this at the time. Both had a strained transition to civilian life and experienced loneliness because of the lack of a support network. They had built a persona and had the respect of their family as a *'well-respected military man'* and felt the loss of that identity upon discharge. They felt they had gone back to where they had started as the *'16-year-old boy'*: *"…it's only until I've come to prison that I've managed to look back and see the trends and the patterns of why I've done certain things, why I've not done certain things. But it's taken me until I've been in prison to be able to speak to people as well. I, it had become very, very lonely. Some people don't understand, some people don't want to know. And you just can't find your place in society really. And you can't explain it. …Because you've been this well-respected military man. You've built yourself up, you know, like the respect built through the years and all that, and then you're back to civvy life. And, like I say, back to being that 16-year-old boy, because that's where you left off. That life was put on pause when this life began and then you go back to this. Press play, and it's like, right."*

They referred to the experience of going into the military from civilian life like *'chalk and cheese'* and suggested there was nothing to compare this to. Their rigorous training meant that they knew the boundaries and *were 'calm in a chaos but your mind is like a chaos in the calm':* "*You've trained for it. Your mind is that set you just go straight into it and all that, but then when you seem to be, you'd be stressed out in a total calm pond."*

Both expressed how they *'left society as a boy'* and *'became soldiers'* unlike peers of their age in civilian society. Both identified very strongly as veterans albeit they recognised that they

were currently classified in a different way. They both appreciated the skills that they developed during their time in the forces. They did not hold the Army responsible for where they are now but could reflect back on the loneliness and isolation that they experienced once they had left, and this was the cause of their current situation: *"I'm not complaining about that, but it's like after that period when you come out, or when you're forced out, when you're left dumped back on the street again."*

There was a clear recognition from both participants of the shame they felt of not upholding the military moral code and to where they had ultimately transitioned. They were concerned about being judged and were conscious of how well other veterans had done. The example below was when the participant recognised someone with whom he had served and was unable to approach them. This also sheds light on why some may be unwilling to disclose their veteran identity: *"But my body wouldn't let me. I just, I couldn't do it. I so wanted it to happen, but I couldn't. And it's the feelings of being ashamed being stuck in here, being not what I was and seeing where he is and I'm not there and there was loads of things running through my head. And then I was thinking, what if he has seen me and then he doesn't want to talk to me because all he's done is read about me".*

Finally, we discussed the support /activities Scottish Prison Services offer. It was evident from the discussion that several initiatives had been introduced and were often well received. However, changes in administration, the impact of Covid and staff moves meant that few activities were maintained over a long period of time. This had a negative impact on their ability to use these services to their best advantage or to see their relevance in their own development.

Murray (2016) concluded that 'the voices of veteran offenders remain marginal to the ever-evolving debate about veterans, crime, and veteran offender policies' She suggests bringing to the fore a different analytical agenda which she refers to as 'veteranality'. There is no doubt that the Scottish Prison Services is putting mechanisms in place to provide the arena to examine the experience of veterans in custody in more detail. Even in an environment where figures for the general prison population in Scotland is declining, veteran numbers remain static indicating a slight rise in overall numbers. Maintaining the statistics on Veterans in custody in Scotland will provide opportunity for future evaluation and investigation. They also highlight some of the current trends in return to custody suggesting a revolving door and a

lack of suitable rehabilitation opportunities for this group. In terms of transition surprisingly there was no specific blame placed on their military career.

It would appear it was more to do with an inability to cope with the emotional aspects of transition which are now a more recognised area than 10 years ago. Having a veteran in custody officer was appreciated and appeared to have a positive impact on day-to-day activity. Nonetheless, since the Covid pandemic few external charities have been able to reinstate the support systems previously offered. There are many questions surrounding rehabilitation and the revolving door syndrome evident in this group. The voluntary nature of disclosure means that the well-maintained data sets are not as accurate as they could be. There is no doubt this is an area where there is a need for further investigation.

7.5 Medical Discharge

When a member of the UK Armed Forces presents with a medical complaint or fitness issue their ability to perform their job will be assessed. If the outcome is that they are unable to carry out their current duties, and alternative employment within the Armed Forces is not available, personnel may leave the Armed Forces prior to the completion of their contract through a medical discharge route and may be entitled to additional payments as part of their military pension.

In this part of the investigation, we had representation from all three Services, ages, and gender. This section will explore some of the challenges that these individuals experienced because of medical discharge, as well as the facilitators and inhibitors to successful transition for this group.

One individual explained how he was medically discharged from the Army and received some compensation, but further appeals were rejected. Due to the poor mental state, he was in during discharge he ended up spending most of the compensation money on daily sustenance, paying rent and other bills, he was unable to maintain an appropriate job and suffered another breakdown. During this time, he also endured a period of homelessness and was sofa surfing, but eventually received support from a veterans housing charity and got veterans accommodation. He greatly appreciated the support he received from the Personnel Recovery Officer (PRO) during his time in the Personnel Recovery Unit (PRU). He later received support from the charity Veterans First Point (V1P) and has since felt much more in control. He noted the importance of the PRO and expressed the need for every individual to be assigned the equivalent of a PRO during their transition from service: *"Every single person who's transitioning, regardless of whether or not it's a medical or sign off, should be assigned like a person who fits with them, i.e., like a transition partner or PRO who fits with them. Who is their number one point of coal, you know? And you know, if you want to do this, you need a lot of them. So, hire a lot of them, hire hundreds of them. But I'm saying, get a load more of them. And make it a real priority. Like every single one can have a phone who, you know, pick up the phone, immediately, get hold of that PRO or whatever".*

Financial difficulties post medical discharge, as well as mismanagement of compensation awarded was apparent from yet another individual who served in the RAF and was medically discharged on mental health grounds. He explained that his poor mental health meant he was unable to process this information appropriately and felt it essential to accept the amount to sustain himself for the immediate future and to pay for bills and other expenses. As he explains further: *"I've tried, in the letter they do say there is an appeal process, but you know, when you're put into the shoes of your ill […]. And it's not a physical broken arm, broken leg, where it heals. You don't know. And sometimes you don't know what's up with, you know, it's horrible. Your last military bit was actually in, a hospital. You don't want to take the chance, you know, because all you see is as of, you know, that date and that month, you are not*

earning. And you don't know whether you're well enough. I didn't know whether I was able or fit to work again. So, when somebody offers you a wee bit of money. You go, yeah, I'll take it, you know."

He also approached two charities, RAFA and SSAFA, who both told him he was ineligible for support because was a single male who was not homeless. This made him feel very disappointed because he did not want to be living with family and being a burden to them. While he received a marginal amount as a pension it was insufficient to maintain a house and meet other expenses while being unfit to work. As is illustrated below: *"And their comment to me was, you've got a home. You've got a roof. Come back to us when you're homeless. And I just sat there going, pardon? And they were like, you are a single bloke. You've got a roof over your head. You've got a minimal pension. So come back to us when are homeless. And I always like. I can't believe that. And just that was it that was really the last time I had to the military. So yeah. And actually, saying it out loud now it sounds, it's not nice."*

It was through the support of his father (an Army veteran) that he applied for jobs while neither had any experience of writing a CV or covering letter. While he is now in secure employment, there was no direct means of translating his military experience into the industry and it was through his own initiative that he found ways to demonstrate this which allowed him progression opportunities.

He further expressed that while he was supported before discharge by his unit, the attitude in his other units and seniors regarding mental health was poor and he faced some level of stigma. He has fond memories of his time in the RAF and serving his country but his poor experiences upon discharge and lack of support from charities has left him feeling let him down. He considers himself extremely fortunate to have family support because he would have struggled without them.

A female who served in the RAF explained how she developed fibromyalgia because it took a significant amount of time to be seen by a specialist. She also explained that she did not get appropriate support during her medical discharge: *"So my discharge process was very hard going because I didn't have the correct medical procedures and I just wasn't looked after because I was in careers offices, although that was a good job on a station, and I really wasn't*

very well looked after when I was coming out. So, I, I didn't know until after a year because it took four months".

She received inadequate medical treatment whilst in service for injuries sustained during service including a misdiagnosis as the medical practitioners were lacked the specialist knowledge: *"I mean, a lot of the doctors are so far removed from general medicine, but actually they don't do things like fibromyalgia. They don't know. And the doctors didn't know about that because that said, as a female and having something like that, that's not something they come across all the time. And because they didn't know much about that. You know, it's just it's the medical treatment I've been through had was awful. The doctors in the military told me I probably had cancer and it just was horrific".*

She expressed that it would have been beneficial to have had her medical and resettlement separately, as this would have helped her cope better: *"Having my medical aligned with my resettlement. Having had my medical appointments properly when I was leaving, then having time and space to do my resettlement separately from my medical things while I was going through that, which really wasn't helpful. Someone somewhere should have said, this isn't happening. Even if it was my line management, they should have put the brakes on my resettlement and said you need to deal with your health and then you need to deal with your resettlement."*

Another female explained how she was medically discharged from the RAF because of PTSD. She also sustained other physical injuries and had to leave reluctantly, as she could not perform her duties to the full extent. As with her previous female participant, she too was misdiagnosed and had to endure several years of ill-health: *"The Department of Community Mental Health. Oh, they're really not very good. So two psychologists had missed three markers of PTSD. I knew I had PTSD, but they were like, No, no, no. You're just a bit weird. You've got depression and burnout. And I knew because I'd had flashbacks, various other things. I'm afraid after 20xx, I saw things a bit fuzzy because I've not had a full night's sleep since then. They didn't pick it up until I saw a decent psychologist in 20xx."*

She approached several charities but was unable to receive support as she was still serving, and the charities only supported veterans and their families. She also did not receive support for her role from her unit and expressed '*they really did let me down in a big way*': *"They've*

actually got a member of the memorandum of understanding that they won't touch Service personnel. And I used to think there was so many organisations to help. And once I was in it, I discovered that nobody you were supposed to go to would take you. I don't think the Legion would provide help either. And I raised that with them. But I certainly never thought I'd have to go that route".

As with the male RAF participant, she too experienced discrimination because there was a lack of understanding of mental health: *"The Air Force and the whole military makes noises about understanding mental health, but they don't really. Because even the personnel a few months before I was finally turned down some of them could be quite patronising. They didn't know how to deal with people who had mental health illness. There was no real assessment done on you to establish what the problem was".*

Similar accounts were also expressed by a few other participants from the Army, and Royal Navy. Noteworthy, was the lack of guidance they received during medical discharge. Their transition is further exacerbated with the other duties they still had to perform until their discharge date whilst in service: *"I think some people who leave the army sometimes are in a better state. But when you have not got a clue what to do and who to go and see, and any guidance on that, then the next minute you are like walking out of the camp gates. And you don't have a leg to stand on because you've nowhere to go …because when you get told that you are leaving for medical discharge, then you've got a year to basically sort your life out. But within that year, you're not being signed off, off the army of any military duties for six months of that year. Then after that, you've got six months to get your life in order properly. Right. Because when you get told that you get medical discharge in the army or you discharge the army, you've still got guard duty, you've still got basic regimental duties for six months. While you are trying to do your transition into civilian street. So, like, it's a lot of pressure".*

As with those in the mainstream, most individuals who were medically discharged expressed the need for some mechanism to be valued and recognised by the forces after leaving. Others emphasised the importance of having a work placement, as this would allow them the opportunity to gain civilian employment given their medical discharge.

There was a general stereotype by the Army that RAF personnel were, civilians in uniform *'we are described as civvies in uniform by the Army'* and that they had greater maturity and the capacity to self-manage. However, there is a need for single individuals and those in junior and lower ranks to be given more information and support so that they do not struggle when leaving. There is a need for better communication to support and prepare individuals for transition to the civilian world, including mental health awareness for staff to reduce the stigma associated with mental health.

There lacks a sense of community and brotherhood in the civilian world, and this can lead to loneliness and isolation. Hence, it was suggested that an aftercare programme could potentially help with transition. Finally, it was noted that while medically discharged individuals leaving the forces can be underprepared for employment and financial stability, they are also vulnerable and are at risk of exploitation in the civilian world. The protected environment in the forces often leaves individuals unprepared for the manipulations outside and there was a need for this to be addressed through a drive for awareness.

7.6 Wraparound Childcare and Nursery Provision

Childcare is a concern that has been raised on behalf of Service families by the Families Federations. The outcome of their recent surveys and those in the wider Armed Forces such as the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS), and the Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS) highlight the lack of affordable childcare and the significant impact this has on partner development and employment. In recognition of the issues and the potential impact this may have on retention, the Secretary of State for Defence recently launched the Wraparound Childcare (WAC) scheme, which supports 20 hours per week of wraparound childcare for eligible Service children between the ages of 4-11 attending before- and after-school clubs in the UK. In addition to this, the Army Family Federation Fund now provides £20000-80000 to support local schools and nurseries within five miles of the base to enable on-site nursery education for Service children. As the case study in Moray demonstrates, however, while the military bases there have the funding to support childcare, the demands in Scotland for childcare to conform to the rules of the Care Commission rather than those set by Ofsted in other parts of the UK, and the lack of additional local infrastructure, mean that this money is often unused.

Notable during the partners' focus group in Lossiemouth was a detailed account of the impact of lack of wraparound nursery facilities for the families. This had been a strong theme throughout the interviews. While recognising the Armed Forces community developments across Scotland, given the more detailed information provided at this focus group, we chose to conduct a more comprehensive investigation in this area. A detailed case study around the lack of childcare and the impact this has on partners, employment, family, poverty and on transition itself was developed from data collected at local authority level from an area that has the one of the largest concentrations of both Service personnel and veterans in Scotland.

7.6.1 Moray Case Study

Some councils such as Argyll and Bute, Moray, and Highland have developed specific resources, described in their websites, to support members of the Armed Forces and veterans. Located in the north-east of Scotland, Moray lies in the north-east of the country, bordering Aberdeenshire and Highland. Like all Scottish local government council areas, Moray has signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant, and currently holds a Silver MOD ERS Award. In Moray the current overall population is 96,410, of which approximately 6% are Service personnel and their families (5785), and 10% are veterans and their families (9641)[54]. RAF Lossiemouth is one of the two areas in Scotland considered to be of particular importance to the MOD's strategic basing, with both receiving significant investment (see Chapter 3).

Moray council has a strong web presence, with information relating to the key areas of interest for forces families, such as housing, education, and employment. It has a particularly good section on its website with information for Armed Forces families. Parents within the Forces (Regular, Reserve and Veterans) are encouraged to ensure that the head teacher at their child's school is aware of their service status, so that the school is able to provide informed support if and when it is needed. With respect to education, several useful links include a parents' guide to education in Scotland, and the MOD's Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS). Other links provide specific information on employment, housing, and Skills Development Scotland.

[54] Moray Council, Connect Monthly, June 2019

We also have information from our study *Rallying to the Flag*[55] about the number of Service children attending schools across Moray, which for Service leavers is 665, Reservists 82, and for serving families is 1038. It should be noted that this is based on information supplied by parents, and that self-identification as an 'Armed Forces family' of any category is optional. It is recognised that many serving in the RAF will not identify themselves for security reasons. Therefore, the data collected is only as accurate as the number of families self-identifying in this way, as reported to the National Education Officer (NEO). Consequently, there is every possibility that these figures under-represent the actual numbers.

In terms of provision at national level, there is, for example, no equivalent of the Service Pupil Premium (SPP) found in England (which is worth £310 per Armed Forces pupil attending state school, including children of veterans). Perhaps more alarming is the lack of eligibility for higher education funding for Forces children if their parent joined the Service elsewhere in the UK, even if Scottish by birth/residence.

Service providers in Moray face several challenges when supporting Forces families due to a variety of factors such as part-time or full-time funding, claiming universal credit or other benefits, and short-term versus longer-term needs. As is often the case elsewhere, as soon as the income threshold is exceeded, access to benefits is lost. This is further compounded in families where one parent has sole responsibility for childcare because the other parent is on deployment, as they are limited in terms of income generation potential and access to family support for childcare. Consequently, they are less able to seek part-time or alternative employment and are at greater risk of falling into poverty: *"…it was almost like having a partner in prison, adapting before leaving, adapting when away, and then readjustment which is constant. Further readjustment is needed when they leave the military, because it's almost like they are getting in the way of everything".*

[55] https://www.napier.ac.uk/-/media/worktribe/output-2867891/rallying-to-the-flag-a-consolidated-picture-of-armed-forces-childrens-education-in.ashx

7.7 Employment and Nursery Facilities

The Parent Employability Project was funded by Scottish Government to address barriers that parents can face in seeking and sustaining employment. The project has collaborated with other services to provide support to parents, but a gap in service was identified with respect to wraparound childcare. We know from our findings that if partners of Service personnel have an established employment history, this removes much of the stress from transitioning personnel in terms of seeking immediate employment after discharge.

To better understand the situation in Moray, an online survey was distributed through schools and social media to gain an understanding of the overall requirements for childcare. Responses included a wide range of schools across Moray, although it is recognised that the level of need of some schools may be much larger than identified in the survey. Over 500 parents responded, 67% of them stating that they required childcare before school without the need for providing breakfast. 86% of respondents expressed the need for childcare support after school and 65% during school holidays. Moreover, it was noted that the lack of childcare also impacted female Service personnel trying to secure childcare in order to return to work. *"Some places were more ready than others, so Lossiemouth was probably more capable and ready to do that because they had the capacity but you're now looking at long waiting lists for the childcare here, so for babies I think it's about 18 to 24 months to get your baby in, by which time your baby…they've got military personnel that can't return to work because they don't have any childcare for their babies"*

The issues faced by Moray are mirrored to lesser degree in other Scottish councils; notably the development at Faslane means that Argyll and Bute face similar challenges. Increases in funding need to be partnered with required infrastructure changes that will be needed, to allow the funding to be used effectively to support this group.

7.8 Island Community

During our data collection phases and in the spirit of inclusiveness we chose to visit four islands to elicit the perspectives of veterans who had chosen to return or move to live on the islands. Our initial plan was to contact The Royal British Legion Scotland (RBLS) on each island branches and to use these as a means of accessing the sample group. This proved to be a

miscalculation on our part. We soon realised there was a major decline in the use of the RBLS by veterans specifically the younger groups. Despite the healthy-looking membership numbers very few of them were in fact veterans. Moreover, it became apparent that there were no working relationships between the RBLS branches in different parts of the islands. The implication here is that the RBLS need to reconsider what it is they are offering to this younger veteran group and amend accordingly. Also worth noting was that the younger veterans did not identify with the term. They associated this with someone who had spent all their working life in the forces or who had been injured as a consequence of that service.

As a means of accessing a sample we used the local radio station and newspaper to provide an explanation of our study. We became aware of breakfast clubs and chose to host these as a means of meeting this group. For many the reason for living on the island was because it was coming back home, or it was where their partner was from. However, there were a growing number who were moving from the mainland for other reasons. These included the scenery and environment which made outside activity so much easier. For others, it was because they could relate more to the morals and values of the island community. This was quite specific to islands who closed all retail activity on Sunday which was considered a small loss for the lives that lived there. Our questionnaires demonstrated the popularity of the highlands and islands for veterans for similar reasons (see Section 5.1).

Interviews with the local authority indicated a similar partnership approach to those of the mainland. However, being an island community, everyone appeared to know each other and felt they could just pick up the phone if there were any issues to be addressed outside regular meetings. Within the NHS there were several veterans employed primarily in management roles albeit there were a few who chose to take on a part-time menial task to support pension income. Overall, there was a view that veterans were made to feel welcome on the islands. One theme which was evident among all the veteran interviews across the four islands was that they were grateful to the Armed Forces for the experiences they had gained while in service and from their perspective *'it was up to me and not them [the Armed Forces] to find a new career'.* Most had returned with a job already organised through family connections or previous employment prior to going into the service.

7.9 Summary

In this chapter we have reported on a more comprehensive investigation into specific areas identified in earlier sections of the study. The family data helped us to understand in more detail the resilience of the Armed Forces partner. Their role is key to the survival of the family and to the settlement, not the community. During what we referred to as 'little t' it was the partner who organised the house, doctor, dentist, and all other aspects of family life. While the Service personnel was deployed, they played the role of the 'lone parent' often some distance from extended family and for many partners this involved the sacrifice of their own career. However, this group were also the ones who demonstrated the greatest deal of potential to offer a smoother transition to their partner.

This was further demonstrated in some of the activities taking place in the Welfare Centres. Partners who had organised committees, set up small business developments, created Facebook pages to support new people with key local information, worked to develop better wraparound nursery services and enhanced the social side of the life. It was this group who had a much closer relationship with the local community and led the way for the rest of the family particularly the Service personnel to become involved. There is a need to examine how the partners and Welfare Centres could be given further opportunity to develop and grow these initiatives and relationships. Education and employment activities directed through the Welfare Centres in partnership with HE and FE institutions should be included. The issue of wraparound childcare will impact strongly on any ability for the group to move the agenda forward.

Veterans in prison and veterans who are in the role of prison officers is an area that would benefit from further investigation. The Scottish Prison Service has demonstrated extremely good practice in the maintenance of statically relevant and telling figures for seven years. However, to understand this more fully, further investigation is needed. The medically discharged group provides insight into their journey and the challenges they faced throughout. Several new initiatives are now in place to support both physical but particularly mental health in veterans is evident albeit we are not yet seeing the full impact of these services. Finally, we explored in more detail the life of veterans who had chosen to live on the islands. The island community demonstrated a very different perspective on their time in the

service and the view that it was their responsibility to manage all aspects of life following transition. The demise of the role and relationships of the RBLS was clearly evident as were the new support systems put in place by the veterans themselves. The morals and values of the island community were strongly held as reasons for veterans to settle there.

8 Discussion and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

The aim of our project was to provide an evidence base that would influence and underpin policy making and service delivery to enable Veterans and their families to lead successful civilian lives. We set out on this study with a clear aim to investigate and to report on four key outcomes and the processes that we used to address them. This is followed by a more in-depth discussion of the overall findings, a set of recommendations and an overview of the strengths and limitations of the study. The four outcomes were:

- An in-depth understanding of the UK research landscape relating to Service leavers, including gaps in the extant evidence base will be generated through a detailed literature review. This was achieved through a systematic literature review and was reported in our Interim Report at the end of year one. This review helped us to develop a clear understanding of the research context, identify gaps and to develop research questions.

- A substantive improvement in the understanding of a range of key demographic characteristics for Service leavers/veterans settling in Scotland such as how their distribution across local authorities will be generated through quantitative analysis of data. Surveys 1 and 2 were created to understand a range of key demographic factors for service leavers/veterans settling in Scotland, such as their distribution across local authorities. The outcomes helped us to form the agenda for further exploration in qualitative interviews in Year 2 and to access our sample group for the interviews and focus groups.

- The concerns and aspirations of Service leavers settling in Scotland and their support needs will be better understood. This outcome was achieved through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation with Key Stakeholders, veterans, Service personnel, and their partners. Several ‘deep dives’ were conducted to elicit a greater understanding. Confirmation that we had captured the aspiration and support needs and was provided in the four validation workshops.

- Decision makers are empowered to make improvements in policy and service provision based on evidence generated and recommendations. Regular updates provided to the Advisory Board ensured that as they emerged main findings were shared with key policy drivers such as Scottish Government, the Scottish Veterans Commissioner, and the 3 services.

The findings of the realist evaluation produced five key themes which prompted a more detailed exploration in the 'deep dives'. The implications of these five themes form the basis of our discussion, conclusion, and subsequent recommendations.

8.2 Time and Timing

By far the strongest message to come out of the collected data related to the concept of time, from both organisational and personal perspectives. Existing in several contexts and with the potential to lead to positive or negative outcomes, the sufficiency of time to prepare for transition, and the timing of resources and measures accessible to the individual, impacted on their ability to engage with the process. Two umbrella themes emerged from the data in this regard. The first was the reported reality that transition can be a short, sharp process and not necessarily implemented just when an individual 'hits the exit button'. The second theme was due to the complex nature of transition, which can be defined differently and occur in various ways, at various times and to various people. Time is the resource most valued by those undergoing any type of transition.

Prior to commencing the study, we understood that in the main, transition occurred over a two-year period once an individual had served a full contract with the military, but further investigation revealed a much more detailed and complex picture, particularly for those transitioning before the end of their full contract. As soon as an individual indicates their intention to terminate their service via the Joint Personnel Administration intranet system, the clock starts ticking. Two stages should then follow; the first line assessment interview and then the mandatory resettlement advisory brief, which is meant to occur in the last few months of the last year of service. Both stages have to be completed before the individual service leaver can be referred to CTP. Our data identified that the timing of many of these

interventions varies widely; in the Royal Navy, for example, transitioning personnel may be on a submarine until two weeks prior to exiting the service.

Having protected time to prepare for transition in terms of uptake of resources (such as CTW) was identified as key to success in the transition process. Those who reported less positive transition experiences were often those who had not had adequate time (for whatever reason) to prepare, whether that was operationally or emotionally. Those who reported a more positive experience often referred to the supportiveness of their chain of command (CO) in enabling them to prepare for exit. For planned transition, this might take the form of time off to look at accommodation, attend workshops, or use learning credits. Respondents recognised, however, that even a supportive CO might not be in a position to release them for these activities, due to the operational needs of the service.

There are many periods which could be referred to as 'transition', both during service and after discharge. This might be considered transition with a 'little t' when personnel and their families relocate during their time in the military to different places. It might also be considered distinctly as planned transition and unplanned transition. For the latter (e.g., medical, or disciplinary) the timing is often completely different, and on a much shorter timescale; many of these activities could be truncated by the short timescales involved, and some personnel (for example those discharged medically) might not be able to make the best use of the resources available to them at that point in time.

Differences in the education system between England and Scotland mean that parents must spend more time supporting their children to adapt to the new system. With each move, parents with children in education are asked to provide a chronology of placements and engagement in their child's learning journey. In Scotland, however, it is particularly challenging for parents of children with additional support needs, as even more time is required to provide a detailed picture of the identification of need, learning experience, interventions, partnership involvement, outcomes, and future planning. This requirement can be exacerbated by frequent and repeated moves across educational jurisdictions. Experience has shown that the educational records compiled by schools, and which should follow the child from establishment to establishment, often get lost, are incomplete, or are completed

to a variable standard. For a mobile Armed Forces family, amassing an accurate and comprehensive record of this pertinent information can be challenging, especially if attempted a long time after events. Advance awareness of the need for an organised history of family home, health, education, and wellbeing contacts and actions would serve and support an Armed Forces family.

8.3 Values and Behaviours

One of the many positive outcomes of life in the military is arguably the set of values and behaviours which are instilled in Service personnel, many of which they carry with them into civilian life, enabling them to make a meaningful contribution in their next role. Indeed, many veterans report an inclination towards the type of employment that most strongly reflects these values and behaviours, such as in the emergency services or with other service organisations, particularly the uniformed ones. It is also true, however, that this can be something of a double-edged sword, particularly in situations where those values are not perceived to be shared by others. This tension may manifest in the workplace for example with someone who is not familiar with non-military ways of interacting with colleagues who they perceive do not hold the same level of standards or ways of working. It may also be reflected in the community into which the veteran settles, particularly if they are returning to somewhere they have not lived for a long time. This was less of an issue for those who lived off-base before transition, as they had more time to integrate in and get to know their community.

Many veterans referred to their inability to 'think or speak civilian' and acknowledged that this could be a perceived barrier to understanding the values and behaviours held by their non-military colleagues and neighbours. Consequently, transition interventions that were considered to be the most successful were those that helped to translate military terms, thinking, skills, and attributes into a civilian equivalent. Where personnel could see this clearly, they were more likely to engage with the resource. Interventions that did not work well either tended to lack this mechanism, or the personnel lacked the opportunity to engage with them.

Generally speaking, we have observed a growing shift in the way in which Service leavers are moving through the transition process, and their ability and willingness to recognise in themselves the skills and attributes they possess (or need) for use in civilian life. This is reflected in an increased capability of CTP to enable personnel to do this in recent years.

8.4 Comfort Zones

It is arguable that anyone undergoing any type of transition is by definition moving out of a comfort zone, one way or another. The consequences of this can have a profound impact on the ability of the individual to adapt to their change in circumstances.

Where this presented a challenge for service leavers was particularly in the emotional aspect of transition, and could lead to a sense of loss, a shift in perception of identity, and in an increased need for camaraderie. For many veterans, this led them to join formal or informal networks after transitioning, allowing them the company of others who understood what they had gone through, and a sharing of values and behaviours that may be lacking in other areas of civilian life. It has been noted, however, that reliance on some of these informal networks, rather than engagement with more structured support, could risk leading to wrong information or incorrectly applied support, and it is important for this area to be addressed in the future.

This could be further complicated by a lack of willingness to self-identify as a veteran (although it is acknowledged that this could be for other reasons such as security). Another widely reported issue in this regard related to a reluctance to show perceived vulnerability to military colleagues, even veterans. This was also borne out during the interview process, where many interviewees remarked that they would not have taken part had they been speaking to someone in a uniform, rather than a civilian they considered to be independent. Linked to this, many respondents said that they were aware of the existence of more formalised support but were unwilling or felt unable to take the initiative and reach out themselves, although they did indicate that they would have welcomed contact from others.

As with other themes we have discussed, comfort zones can present a challenge at various stages in the transition process, but also during service, and for families of personnel as well

as the personnel themselves. Some personnel reported feeling uncomfortable mingling with those of different ranks at networking events, and interestingly, the same is true of their partners. Many of the latter reported feeling isolated at social events on base shortly after relocating, because partners of different ranks are also uncomfortable mingling with each other in this way. This can lead to delays in settling and integration when a family relocates during service, hindering the effectiveness of the 'transition' process. Some (but not all) of the Welfare Centres, held briefing events around deployment to let the family know what was happening, including support for commonwealth groups, who were often disadvantaged due to cultural barriers. Moreover, the Welfare Centre was often perceived as a place for those who were struggling, and consequently they were reluctant to engage with the support offered unless it was essential. This sense of pride and reluctance to ask for help was a common theme across interviews with active personnel, veterans, and families. This is a perfect opportunity for the Armed Forces and Welfare Centres to empower the partner groups, as previously identified in the Moray case study.

It was recognised by most that there is no 'magic wand' to alleviate the discomfort experienced in these situations but being more cognisant and mindful of the challenges associated with it may mean that it doesn't slow up the effectiveness of the process quite so much going forward.

8.5 Engagement

It is clear that in Scotland there is an effective partnership between SDS, CTP and SCQF, and this partnership and the associated tools and resources available have the potential to benefit service leavers in Scotland in a way that is not matched elsewhere in the UK. The processes that CTP and the partnership are putting in place now are arguably more organised and smooth flowing in nature than previously, and this makes the transition process correspondingly smoother for service leavers, who do not need to go to different locations to get the information they need. There are also evidenced good practice examples such as the National Transition Officer for Armed Forces Children, Lothian Armed Forces Veterans Group (LAFVG), as well as the Scottish Veterans Wellbeing Alliance (SVWA). There was also evidence of strong local authority engagement with the veteran's community on the outer Hebridean

islands (Lewis, Harris & Uist). However, there was also strong evidence of the lack of engagement by younger veterans with the local RBLS.

We also know, however, that in practice, this joined-up approach does not always lead to effective engagement with resources – or at least that this has not always been the case in the past. Many veterans reported feeling overwhelmed by the sheer amount of information available both pre and post-transition and finding it difficult to understand what is relevant to them. In many cases, this was alleviated by discussion with a transition officer (or equivalent) who could signpost the individual to what was most relevant to their circumstances. Across our sample group it was clear that these issues have improved over the last few years, but it is important to recognise that even with the advent of new and improved processes, there are still some personnel going through the 'old' process who may risk slipping through the net in this regard. Many interviewees consequently identified the need for a more individualised approach to transition. This is not to say that there is an expectation of a completely individual, one-to-one format of support throughout and after transition, and indeed this would not be logistically possible.

Engagement with the right resources at the right time is an issue both pre-and post-transition and can be for several reasons. Those who reported positive transition experience were often those who had taken the initiative and engaged themselves, and/or those who had a supportive CO who was able to release them to prepare for transition as previously mentioned. Even those who expressed frustration that they could not be released to undertake these activities recognised the importance of a supportive CO who valued their contribution even after they had 'hit the button'.

Education is an area we know has a lot of potential for improvement. Restrictions on the use of learning credits can be an issue, particularly when they are not available to partners in most cases. Even when they are, it may be the case that partners are not in a position to be able to use them. Most partners were interested in self-development through opportunities to study/upskill and in employment but recognised the difficulty of securing employment which would accommodate childcare provision. The Moray case study highlighted the lack of wraparound affordable childcare and the significant impact this has had on partner

development and employment. This was further compounded with the issue of recognition of qualifications across deployment zones in the UK and more specifically the lack of recognition of degree level qualification among the commonwealth community. Moreover, there is the need to address the specific disadvantage faced by many of the Armed Forces personnel, partners, and their children in terms of the ineligibility of funding for higher education when living in Armed Forces accommodation in Scotland.

It is clear that some personnel are able and willing to engage effectively with the process and resources available, and it is equally clear that some are reluctant to do so. It is unfortunately also the case that some such as veterans in custody are unable; engagement with resources might be hindered for other reasons, particularly if the transition is unplanned as previously mentioned, but it is also true that some personnel may be unwilling to accept the reality of transition and all that it entails. This means that preparation may be left until the last minute, resulting in a rushed and less effective transition.

As with values/behaviours, engagement with resources is generally far more effective when personnel can see a clear direction of travel from military to civilian equivalents. This can be further enhanced (and unfortunately also hindered) by the level of engagement demonstrated by the person coordinating the transition process. Whilst this may be for operational purposes at different stages in transition, it is important for engagement to be two-way rather than unidirectional.

8.6 Expectations/decision-making

One phenomenon we observed often during data collection was the 'double transition'. Veterans would settle in one place and then relocate again a few years later to another part of Scotland. We acknowledge that this might be in part due to the somewhat itinerant nature of service life, or sometimes it is due to changes in circumstances (for example changes in family structure or children leaving school), nevertheless, veterans often reported that they relocated again because their expectations were rather different to the reality in which they found themselves. This might be related to the community in which they settled but could also be related to employment in other areas. Some individuals moved away from mainland to the islands because the values and beliefs of the island population were more in keeping

with their own. Many reported that they could not have understood what civilian life would be like until they experienced it, so it was difficult to prepare adequately, whilst identifying that having a 'veteran buddy' or a work placement opportunity would have aided this process. Having access before transition to another veteran who had experienced transition was considered as a support system that would really help.

Some personnel reported feeling devalued as soon as they 'hit the button' to start the transition process, which could foster feelings of 'neglect' and add to the sense of loss. Nonetheless, they acknowledged the operational need for the military to keep doing what was needed to provide the same operational service, so it is arguable that there will always be a tension here. It is important to underline here that personnel were cognisant of the need to maintain service and did not expect to be 'spoon-fed' at any point but would welcome a less utilitarian approach to the different stages of transition. This would enable them to engage more effectively with the resources that were right for them, make better use of their time (however limited it may be), and maximise their opportunity for successful transition.

We note that this form of 'triage' is already practised successfully in battlefield medicine; whilst approaches to treatment of specific conditions are consistent, the triage process itself is a tailored approach to applying those treatments, depending on the individuals involved and their needs. We understand that this already happens within the medical discharge process, and we believe that a similar approach to the transition process would be valuable in planned transition, where 'triaging' would happen prior to engagement with CTP which considers the unique circumstances of the individual. As with battlefield medicine, where the medics involved are familiar with and experienced in all kinds of medical emergencies and their outcomes, ideally, this would involve input from veterans who had already been through the transition process and understood it from an experiential perspective.

8.7 Conclusion

Overall, it is evident that there is solid support for veterans in Scotland, starting at the top with the Scottish Government, who along with the other Governments in the United Kingdom, launched the Strategy for Our Veterans in November 2018. The Strategy set out a vision, principles, and various aims to support veterans and their families; the Scottish

Government published their refreshed action plan this year[56]. The very existence of a Cabinet post with "veterans" in its title – in this case held by the deputy leader of the SNP – is a very positive indication of a national welcome to members of the Armed Forces community. This is echoed through the formal structures in Government. So, for example, all 32 Scottish local authorities, all NHS Health Boards, most Scottish universities, and the Scottish Government itself have signed the Armed Forces Covenant. In addition, since 2014[57] Scotland has had the specific post of a Scottish Veteran's Commissioner whose office have produced a range of valuable reports related to key aspects of the Armed Forces Covenant and its implementation in Scotland.

Importantly, military tradition has been incorporated into the Scottish image. Words associating Scotland as a nation with military formations occur commonly, for example the Scots Guards, Royal Scots, King's Own Scottish Borderers, Royal Scots Fusiliers, Scots Dragoon Guards, and even the Modern Royal Regiment of Scotland. There is no equivalent national association for England found in the titles of regiments or formations. Moreover, it is possible to point to several cultural features that would suggest to Armed Forces families that they are welcome in Scotland. These features include but are not limited to: the proud and very well-known histories and traditions of the Scottish infantry and cavalry regiments; the fact that there are very visible memorials throughout Scotland; the well-publicised role of the 51st Highland Division in World War 2 at Dunkirk, the Western Desert campaign and in north-west Europe; the importance of naval bases at Faslane, Rosyth, and Scapa Flow in both World Wars; the well-known role Scotland played in providing training bases for WW2 commandos; the world-wide reputation of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo; the well evaluated contribution of 'Army at the Fringe' and the association of the national musical instrument - the bagpipes - with the military.

Our study has supported evidence and demonstrated several similarities with other studies[58] that have previously been conducted in relation to the experiences of transition in England and Wales. While not unexpected, it was interesting to note that many of the concerns

[56] strategy-veterans-taking-strategy-forward-scotland-refreshed-action-plan.pdf
[57] The third Scottish Veterans Commissioner was appointed in 2022.
[58] Discussed in greater detail through the literature review in our Interim Report: https://www.napier.ac.uk/-/media/youre-in-your-own-time-now--interim-report.ashx

experienced by the Scottish group in the process of transition were in line with those in other parts of the UK. Our study provides a more nuanced understanding of the transitional support needs for veterans, Service personnel and their partners contextualised in Scotland. It has highlighted the demand for services and the need for these services to be continued and where possible, to be expanded to support the wider Armed Forces community including partners and children in relation to educational opportunities, employment, and wraparound childcare facilities. There remains serious work to be done in relation to the recognition of people's qualifications both from commonwealth groups and across the UK. The potential for the development of Welfare Centres to be so much more than they currently are and to draw from the encouraging examples such as the Hive and the use of social media by the Wives Committee at Lossiemouth should be promoted. Where social media has been used, updated, and maintained it has proved to be of extreme help. Another example of this is evident in some of the council website such as Moray, where specific information for Armed Forces Personnel and their families can be found. It has also identified some areas where other service providers could be included and identified opportunities for future partnership working. Moreover, a major difference in this study is the clear pattern of partnership working evident across all levels of those who support our Armed Forces in Scotland. The commitment across these groups by signing up to the Covenant demonstrates Scotland's willingness to not only support Service personnel but also valuing the contributions made by veterans and service families both to local employment and communities.

Moving from the statements of intention and governmental structures to actions, the actual strength of that welcome was not always clear and there still remain areas where development is required to enhance Armed Forces Personnel's experiences of our education. The current funding system is Scotland mitigates against the development of an educational transition pathway and creates disadvantage for partners and children who may wish to develop on to higher education. Furthermore, differences in Scottish and English qualifications create barriers in recognising these and its application in education or employment. For instance, evidence from our study indicates that most of those choosing to transition to Scotland from other parts of the UK have historically not received enough Scotland specific information or support, although there are signs that that is changing. There is perhaps a lack of awareness in some areas of Veterans Champions across local authorities

in Scotland, although this information is available on the excellent Veterans Assist Scotland website run by Veterans Scotland. Positive relocation to Scotland was usually identified by individuals who were Scottish by birth, had a Scottish partner or had immediate family for support.

Finally, the Service leaver thinking of settling in Scotland needs to accommodate the fact that in leaving the Armed Forces they are moving from a UK-based organisation to a separate nation within the UK. This change will be most marked for families physically moving from elsewhere in the UK. Scotland, particularly since Devolution, has developed in ways that are superficially like the rest of the UK, but which are importantly different. Most obviously there is a devolved parliament and government, which has made full use of powers to pass new laws on top of the traditional areas of difference for example in the criminal justice and education systems. Taxation rates are different in Scotland to the rest of the UK, and so too are support systems and benefits such as child welfare, and prescription charges. The political landscape of Scotland is also unique – most obviously through the strong presence of parties promoting independence because of which the participation of Scots as members of and bases for the UK Armed Forces. All of these, and other factors should weigh on the service leaver, and so, the support that is provided for them.

8.8 Recommendations

The research findings strongly support the following recommendations to ensure the continued transition support for veterans, Service personnel, and their partners living in Scotland. The recommendations have been grouped under four categories Policy, Practice, Education and Research.

8.8.1 Policy

- The mobility factors of Serving Personnel are peculiar aspects of the demography of that population which are often not captured. This has significant resource implications for local councils and services. Community Planning operates at a macro strategic level with a 15-year planning projection. To work effectively in this context the military themselves must be active participants with local planning groups and clarify their long-term plans for bases. Likewise, there is a need for community planning to take into consideration and potentially work in partnership with the

Armed Forces in their respective areas to be able to meet the demands of this growing population.

- The overall context for improvement activity in Scottish education is provided through the National Improvement Framework (NIF) which is revised and published annually by the Scottish Government. The NIF highlights an increase in the number of children and young people who require additional support in most schools and draws attention to learners affected by interrupted learning. Interrupted learning is seen as being a significant factor in the education of Armed Forces children and more requires to be understood about its impact together with the incidence of additional support needs in this part of the pupil population. This recognition identifies additional support needs, and specifically interrupted learning, as a significant area for further support from Scottish Government.

- There is a need for more in-depth work into the experiences of veterans in custody in Scotland. Statistics from the Scottish Prison Services highlight some of the current trends in return to custody, suggesting a 'revolving door' and a lack of suitable rehabilitation opportunities for this group.

- All councils should implement a detailed information section on their webpages for Service personnel transitioning from England to Scotland. The Moray webpages provide a good framework which could be replicated.

- Serving Personnel deployed to Scotland pay more VAT and Income Tax than the rest of the UK, despite the base being considered a UK entity. While this is mitigated by the MoD for Serving Personnel it is not the case for veterans. This imbalance requires further exploration. Moreover, for members of the Royal Navy once they start transition process, they immediately incur a reduction in pay, and this too requires further consideration.

- Further investigation is required to find a better mechanism to recognise or incorporate teaching and childcare qualifications from England and Wales in Scotland by developing intensive bridging courses. This pathway could be delivered in the Welfare Centres to support partners with children. Qualified partners could then apply these skills in providing 'behind the wire' childcare support.

- There is a need for funding between England and Scotland to promote opportunities for partners and families to engage in education and training opportunities for e.g., nursing and midwifery. Although both qualifications are recognised UK-wide, funding may need to be negotiated so that studies may be started in one part of the UK and completed in another. Similar consideration should also be given to teacher and nursery qualifications which currently are recognised very differently in each part of the country.

8.8.2 Practice

- Consideration should be given to approach transition in a less utilitarian and more individualised way, where a consistent approach is applied across the forces, but which involves a more targeted element of execution both pre- and post-transition. This could optimise engagement with resources at the right time and where they are most valuable. This is particularly important at the time when Service personnel are beginning to consider their transition options.

- Focusing on the self can be difficult for the individual, as a group mentality tends to be advocated whilst in service. This lack of focus on the outside world and their own transition can potentially further reduces engagement with pre-transition services. There is a need for support and a more defined early pathway to reduce negative outcomes of transition, by considering the emotional identity of the Service personnel.

- Transition 'mentors' should be appointed, who have themselves already experienced transition. Often those still in service are unable to relate to life outside the forces. Indeed, for those who maintain residence in Armed Forces accommodation there is little preparation for the reality of living in a civilian community. These mentors should be available to Service personnel who are in the early stages of considering their transition.

- Welfare Centres Officers could engage veteran mentors, who could use the facility for the development of an informal buddy system to reduce misinformation by signposting to appropriate organisations.

- It was evident throughout the study that Armed Forces partners represent a strong force for change. Empowering this group and promoting some of the positive interventions, such as RAF Hive system, has the potential to offer developmental/educational/employment opportunities to partners, ultimately leading to the support of a smoother transition for the Serving personnel.

- A valuable MOD directive that promotes the importance of record keeping for families ought to be considered. These records could be identified as 'folder for families' and be like that provided for Serving personnel to record their career attainment and achievements, as well as include details to help support mobility, transitions, arrival and departure, and history of events and lived experiences.

- For those medically discharged, there is a need for better communication to support and prepare individuals for transition to the civilian world, including additional mental health awareness training for the Chain of Command, to help reduce the stigma associated with mental health.

- Defence Transition Services must consider better engagement practices with the local authorities in relation to future military accommodation models to enable improved planning for and integration to civilian and military communities. A good example is the lack of infrastructure to support childcare.

- Reticence amongst veterans in accepting support can be mitigated through early mapping of skills to increase self-confidence. Additionally, support from the MOD in the form of Keep in Touch (KIT) days after leaving the forces can help post-transition.

8.8.3 Education

- There is a need to stipulate/set aside 'protected time' for Serving personnel to use Learning Credits, as this would aid career development and progression both during and after service through the effective use of these credits.

- The use of Learning Credits by the partners of those medically discharged is recognised. Consideration of unused Learning Credits being made available for partners pre or post transition would aid opportunities to study/upskill for potential employment. Strong consideration should be given for working more closely with the FE: HE network ADVANCE in Scotland would allow for a pilot of hybrid educational

opportunities to be delivered across Welfare Centres for Serving personnel and partners.

- In order to promote integration into Higher Education there should be a pilot study conducted to promote stronger delivery links between the Armed Forces and HE and FE providers.
- Further work needs to be done into the recognition of the qualifications in the UK of commonwealth partners and how this might be harnessed for further education or employment opportunities.
- The funding system for further and higher education needs to be readdressed for Serving Personnel, veterans, and their families. The current funding system in Scotland mitigates against the development of an educational transition pathway and creates disadvantage for partners and children who may wish to develop on to higher education.

8.8.4 Research

- To be consistent with the Morgan review[59] action plan research should take account of the experience of Armed Forces children and their parents or carers. It also follows that taking account of the views of these groups should form an important component of any research methodology. Educational outcomes should be a focus of research both from being a valuable source of evidence but also on the aspects of measurable performance which are most relevant and meaningful for this group of young people.
- Early Service Leavers - those with less than 4 years' service - are most vulnerable, as they get limited support on leaving. Often there may be unidentified pre-service issues, which can lead to further difficulties post-discharge. There is a need for further research to identify more support for this group/set aside.
- In terms of employment and employability, there needs to be work conducted on the development of consistent assessment tools, which would capture data on veteran

[59] Angela Morgan's review of implementation of additional support for learning (the ASL Review) was a significant moment in Scotland's educational landscape. The broad engagement that Angela undertook as part of the review had the voices of children and young people, parents and carers and professionals at its heart. It provided the opportunity to hear first-hand their experiences of how additional support for learning is being implemented across Scotland.

employment across Scotland and the UK. This could be piloted with the uniformed services and extended where appropriate.

- The limited opportunities for many partners impact on their identity and development, yet this group represent the very backbone of the Armed Forces. Studies need to be conducted to explore career opportunities which could be promoted and enriched by developing the Welfare Centres to support education and entrepreneurial activities in partnership with their local HE: FE providers, ADVANCE, Scottish Innovation Centres, Skills Development Scotland, and other relevant groups.
- Little research has been done into the use of a comfort cub or bear to support a child to deal with the grief and loss associated with a deployed parent. In this study we observed the powerful impact of the military doll and the value placed on that by the military child. Further studies need to be conducted to both evaluate and enhance this process.
- Throughout the current study we became aware of impact of developments in diversity and inclusion policies relating to culture, mental health, families, and gender. While this study focused on transition out of the Armed Forces, there is now a need to explore current transition practices into the Armed Forces. All of which will impact on future recruitment, development, and retention of Service personnel.
- How the term 'veteran' is perceived and understood today needs further investigation. Our younger participants did not relate to this term. A veteran was defined as someone who had served in combat or who did national service. There is a need to explore the current perceived definition of 'veteran' from the perspective of regulars, reservists, veterans, and the wider community.
- The outcomes of the study confirmed the decline of the popularity of RBLS among the younger veteran group, who did not identify with them as a source of support. The implication here is that the RBLS need to investigate their current service provision and reconsider what they are offering to the younger veteran group and amend accordingly.

- An interesting outcome apparent across all the island data was the gratitude towards the Armed Forces for the training received. This group saw it as their responsibility and not that of the Armed Forces to find future employment. Moreover, veterans who had specifically moved to live on the islands, did so because of the morals and values of the island people. It would be useful to have a fuller understanding of the key aspects of island life that promote the perspectives above and attract veterans to live there.

- The Reserves are seen as central to the UK's defence, and reservists themselves are integrated frequently into regular forces' training and deployments. Within this study, many of the veterans maintained their links with the military after leaving regular military service by joining the reserves. A comparative study investigating the value of this practice in terms of supporting a softer transition needs further exploration. Moreover, the needs of Reservists and their families are like those of regular service families and should be included in any future research.

8.9 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

Our study used nine different data collection techniques to explore the experience of transition in Scotland for Service personnel, veterans, and their families. To capture the most recent views of service leavers, we chose to focus only on those who had transitioned in the past ten years or who were still in the process of transition. The wide geographical nature of our sampling ensured there was inclusion and diversity across Scotland. The response rate to our data collection techniques added strength to the outcomes of the study. The sequential nature of the data collection process allowed for both exploration and explanation. Four additional workshops were conducted to validate the findings, feedback from which was excellent in terms of data capture of the reality of the challenges of transition in Scotland. Moreover, a significant strength was the inclusion of an Advisory Board including key influencers from the military and various stakeholder organisations. The Board met on a bi-monthly basis, providing oversight and guidance to help steer the project to ensure outcomes delivered maximum impact.

One of the main issues we faced throughout the research was the changing nature of the context in which the study was being conducted. We began our study in November 2020 and

much of the data collection was conducted between 2021 and 2022. We were aware of major changes in policy through the implementation of the new Holistic Transition Policy (2019), incorporating the Defence Transition Services (DTS) to support Service leavers and their families who were most likely to face challenges adjusting to civilian life. On 20th May 2022 the Tri-Service resettlement policy changed (2022DIN01-052), which now ensures that all Service leavers are compulsorily registered for CTP services at some point in their resettlement period. Access to resettlement is now established as a key part of 'The Offer' and military Terms and Conditions of Service. In accordance with UK GDPR legislation, service leavers do retain the right to opt-out of CTP Services by informing their CTP career consultant.

Concurrently, geographical changes have occurred across Scotland in terms of extensions to both Lossiemouth and Faslane bases. As with any new policy, while processes will be put in place to introduce it, a significant proportion of our study population had already either transitioned out before this new process was introduced or were nearing the end of their military career and so were not engaged or affected by it. Moreover, the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic also impacted the workshops and translation of the policies into practice. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that this study reports on the current landscape of transitioning individuals in Scotland who are not seeing the effects of the recent inclusive policies introduced since 2019.

How attractive Scotland is to Armed Forces families, and particularly service leavers, may only be known once data are available which can be used to study settlement patterns and trends. This work is hindered by the absence of data on the numbers of Scots actually in the Armed Forces (as distinct from serving in the Armed Forces in Scotland), since this information is not collected by the Ministry of Defence. Similarly, although data are available on the numbers of veterans elsewhere in the UK through the 2021 Census, this information is not yet available for Scotland, where the exercise was not conducted until 2022. While the census will give us a clearer account of the number of veterans in Scotland, this too is subject to change. Even without those data, however, it is clear that the level of attractiveness of Scotland will depend very much on the situation, context, and perceptions of the individual or family. It will also depend on the experience of that family in Scotland and the communities with which they

have had contact and in particular the level of empathy that exists for Armed Forces and the military way of life found at local level.

We conducted this study at a time when the Armed Forces were going through tremendous changes in policy, and as such what we have captured is a snapshot of both those who are transitioning in the context of JSP 100 and those still in the 'old' system. We also recognise that as the military continues to evolve, so will the process of transition, and the need to bridge between evolving processes is evident to ensure effective transition for all.