

The Transition Mapping Study

Understanding the transition process for Service personnel
returning to civilian life

August 2013



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References with web links (URLs) were working and accessible on Monday 29 July 2013.



Foreword

by Admiral the Lord Boyce KG GCB OBE DL



There are compelling reasons why this Report should be read by all those who are involved in the transition of military personnel and their families from a career, and a life, in the Armed Forces back into the civilian world. Policy makers, operational deliverers in both the charity and statutory sectors and each individual member of the Armed Forces community will find an issue or a recommendation that is theirs to act upon.

For policy makers, the Armed Forces Covenant - formalised in 2000 - and the more recent Community and Corporate covenants articulate the national position that personnel leaving the Armed Forces should not be disadvantaged by their service. This Report suggests that most who leave enjoy a highly successful transition into civilian life, their lives having been enriched by their years in service, and that most go on to become positive economic and social contributors to society. Particularly vulnerable to failure, though, are those who are not entitled to resettlement support, or who lack educational qualifications; and those who are required to serve their final months either deployed or distant from their chosen civilian life. These barriers can be overcome by changes to in-service policies.

Those who support the transition process, and who help those most vulnerable, can also improve their delivery. Quality and consistency of resettlement training and advice vary greatly across the country, as do the attitudes of the chains of command of those still serving. Transition is a normal, and honourable, part of a Service person's career and should be accorded the same importance as training for a new role, or preparing for a deployment.

The Report also highlights the essential role that the family plays in successful transition. Yet policy and delivery rarely take this into account, despite the modest resources such a change of approach would require.

Finally, there is the individual who stands most to gain from a successful transition, and who has the biggest part to play in it. There is a need to inculcate an attitude on joining that recognises the inevitability of eventual transition; an attitude that ensures adequate future planning; and an attitude that takes the resilience of the battlefield and transfers it into the resilience of transition - financial, cultural, and emotional. This is how the individual can deliver successful transition.

And were we to discount the recommendations of this Report, we should still measure everything against the ten Guiding Principles which are applicable to policy maker, deliverer and individual.

And even were we to leave aside the practical, policy and moral arguments, there is a clear and evidence-based economic case for change. Failed transition cost the State upwards of £113 million in 2012, and the financial cost to the charity sector and to the individual was many times more - not to mention the quality-of-life cost to the individual of ill-health, imprisonment or family breakdown. These though are the symptoms of failed transition. The Forces in Mind Trust exists to identify and to address the causes of failed transition, and I commend their work and, in particular, the recommendations and principles described in this seminal report.

Admiral the Lord Boyce is Patron of the Forces in Mind Trust, and a former Chief of the Defence Staff.



Preface

A good transition in the 2020s

as imagined by Ray Lock, Chief Executive, Forces In Mind Trust

When I joined up all those years ago, there was a lot of fuss made about having ‘fixed transition’. Some veterans’ charity or trust had done an expensive study a couple of years earlier, which everyone bought into, and that seemed to sort it. I say a ‘veterans’ charity, but we don’t really call ourselves veterans anymore. How can you when you might only have done a couple of years in uniform? I enjoyed my time in service – all my family did – and it’s an important part of me, but it hasn’t defined me as a person. And I say expensive, but I remember reading that the study cost less than the price of putting a couple of my mates behind bars.

I hadn’t done brilliantly at school, too busy playing rugby, drinking beer and chasing girls I suppose. Pretty much the same as my Dad, difference was Mum threw him out before I was a teenager. So joining up seemed like a good option, and I remember the recruiter telling me how it required total commitment, but my time in uniform would eventually come to an end and I needed to prepare now for it. Of course I ignored him, but during training a few of the lads dropped out, and it was great to see how the system looked after them with things like accommodation, and jobs advice. I still keep in touch with some, and they’ve done really well.

So when I got onto my first unit, I wasn’t surprised that the CO banged on about how we needed to use our time sensibly, and how we had to try and collect skills and qualifications that would help us when we left. He said we weren’t being disloyal, but leaving was an inevitable part of service, and we had to build resilience for that stage of our lives, as much as we had to do for the next op tour. I was surprised though at how easy that proved – every bit of training I did gave me something that was recognisable in civvy street. And I also had the chance to catch up on what I’d missed out at school – English and Maths especially.

Life was great, and initially I invested my wages wisely in cars, gadgets and Guinness. But gradually the life skills training we had every week had an effect. It helped that we had to pay accommodation charges by direct debit (I’d never heard of one of those before I joined) so I mastered on-line banking and managing a personal budget. And beer in the Naafi was the same price as outside the wire, so I knew what it cost to live. Thankfully, we had a scheme where people from the Unit who’d recently left came along occasionally just for a chat, so I knew that I had to start saving to put down a rental deposit the day I left, and how important it was to be on an electoral roll, to have a credit history and stuff like that. We’d been told all of that during life skills, but hearing it from someone who’d already done the transition thing was really important.

I won’t lie – I’ve had some dark moments. Peacekeeping in Africa and seeing that awful death pit we’d been powerless to prevent left me with some pretty horrendous images – and nightmares. Not that I’ve got PTSD, but it’s been handy to be able to find the mental well-being support I needed easily while I was serving, and great that that support has followed me seamlessly into the civilian world – even my medical and dental records magically appeared at my local surgery.

When I got together with my partner, the Unit was really supportive. Under the new system we were entitled to service accommodation even though we weren’t married, and my partner (who didn’t know anyone in the military until we met) was really well treated. She was given exactly the same information and support about transition as me, and even went along to classes at the HIVE where she



was coached in what role families have in transition. When I look back, she (and our three lovely kids) helped me understand civvy street as much as all the other stuff. And it was a shock – we’d had women in our Unit most of my time, but even so I had to learn that how we’d all behaved (women included) behind the wire wasn’t appropriate outside. Some call it political correctness, but I see it as that’s just how civilian society is, and you have to learn to adapt to it. Same applies to time at work – chatting around the coffee bar isn’t called work where I am now, but on the other hand, come 5 o’clock, you’re expected to leave. That culture shock could have been a real obstacle.

But fortunately, I always had my leaving date in my mind (okay, initially I looked on it as a year, then a month, then a day). I’d started looking around, and the ‘work placement’ scheme really helped me identify what I wanted from a career, which is much more than just a job. My CO was really supportive again (she didn’t have any choice – it was all there in King’s Regulations anyway) and made sure that I had time away from work to do my resettlement courses, and work with a range of companies, all of who’d signed a corporate covenant, whatever that is. That’s also how I made the connections and got my first job, and for that I’d definitely thank my resettlement adviser, who sat down with me to develop my personal pathway through transition and who knew how to tap into all sorts of other resources.

It helped that for the last couple of years I’d been screened from long deployments – I still did my bit, but it was made clear to me that my priority was to sort out my next career out of uniform. Being posted as near as possible to where my partner’s family lived was also important – it’s where we’d decided to settle – and it meant that I could do work placement, look for a house, get the kids into the right school without it needing hours in the car and away from work. And I got to join the local rugby club (they needed a wise old prop). They’ve already asked me to become treasurer (thanks maths teacher!) and I’ve got a good bunch of friends around me who’ve spent as long in the ‘real world’ as I did in the military.

I had a great life in service, worked with some brilliant people and picked up a gong or two along the way. I’m proud of what I did, but I have a different identity now. I’m a successful employee in a local firm, with a happy family and a decent social life. I know how to get help if I need it, and I have a network that allows me to help those who are at an earlier stage of their transition journey. I took responsibility for my own transition when I walked into that recruitment office – sure I’ve needed plenty of support along the way, but as I’ve been the one with most to gain from successful transition, who else would you put it charge?

We were tidying out the garage last week and I came across my last service kit bag, stuffed full of mouldy boots, socks and other stash I thought I might need when I left, but never did. I came across a tattered credit card-size piece of cardboard. I thought at first it must have been an old Card Alpha, the rules of engagement we used to carry everywhere; but I read it and realized that it was an idiot’s guide to transition with the grand title ‘Guiding Principles for a Good Transition’. It’s been a while since I first got that; but funny old thing, they worked for me, and for everyone else involved in transition. Rules of engagement for transition – maybe that was the key to a good transition.



Executive Summary

Since the Armed Forces Covenant was published in 2000, there has been increased interest in the process of helping Service people transition from the Armed Forces into civilian life. In 2006 this process was formalised when the Ministry of Defence published its Strategy for Veterans.

The Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT), which has been set up to improve the transition process, commissioned The Futures Company to review existing research, to understand how the transition process currently works, how it is viewed by stakeholders and by recent Service leavers, to develop a model that quantified the costs of poor transition to the UK as a whole, and to make recommendations on how to reduce the number of poor transitions. The research focused on full-time personnel, not reservists.

Transitioning from military service into civilian life is inevitable for almost all Armed Forces personnel; only a tiny proportion proceeds through to a full career. Most transitions are successful. One of the reasons for this is because of the resources invested in them by the Armed Forces. At the same time, a “good transition” is undefined. For the purposes of this project we developed with help from stakeholders the following definition:

“A good transition is one that enables ex-Service personnel to be sufficiently resilient to adapt successfully to civilian life, both now and in the future. This resilience includes financial, psychological, and emotional resilience, and encompasses the ex-Service person and their immediate families.”

There are recurring themes in the research in this report.

- Transition experiences vary greatly. They are significantly influenced by both the individual’s attitude to transition, and by their wider social context.
- The differences between military and civilian life are under-estimated. Even for those who are well-prepared, the cultural difference can come as a surprise.
- Families matter. The extent to which a Service-leaver’s family is able to help is a strong indicator of transition success (this extends beyond spouses and partners to parents and siblings).
- Financial awareness is important. Individuals can be financially cocooned within the Services. The financial demands of civilian life can be a shock.
- The quality and consistency of the transition process within the Services have improved but the process remains uneven; and after transition, the safety net that could be provided by Services charities is hard to navigate.

Outflows

In 2009/10, 18,570 people left the Armed Forces. This number is lower than the present annual rate because of current redundancies under the Strategic Defence and Security Review. However, the data are useful as a guide to the long-term patterns of Service outflows.

Resettlement support is graduated and largely depends on length of service. It is delivered in three tiers: first, an initial briefing at unit level, second, support through a resettlement adviser; and third, a



full range of resettlement training and support delivered through the Career Transition Partnership (CTP), a commercial partnership between Right Management and a number of voluntary sector Services charities funded through a Ministry of Defence contract.

Service leavers with six years' service or more benefit from all three tiers; those with four to six years' service receive the first two tiers; those with less than four years (Early Service Leavers or ESLs) receive only the first tier. Different arrangements apply to leavers who are medically discharged and also those who are administratively or dishonourably discharged.

Of the 18,570 leavers in 2009/10, around three-fifths (61.2%) left from the Army, and just under one-fifth each from the Navy and RAF (19.5% and 19.3% respectively). Of the total number of leavers, fractionally over half (50.5%) were Early Service Leavers; of whom around one-third of ESLs were trained and two-thirds untrained. Similarly, just *under* half of all leavers (49.5%) had more than four years' service and were entitled to second- and third-line support from the CTP. Of this longer-service group, around one-fifth had served for four to six years and was entitled to second-line support. The rest, representing around 7,500 leavers of the total number of leavers, had served for six years or more and were entitled to the full CTP transition package.

Figure 1.1: Breakdown of outflows (Financial year 2009/10)



.Source: UK Defence Statistics 2010, additional MOD data. Percentages do not total to 100 because of rounding.

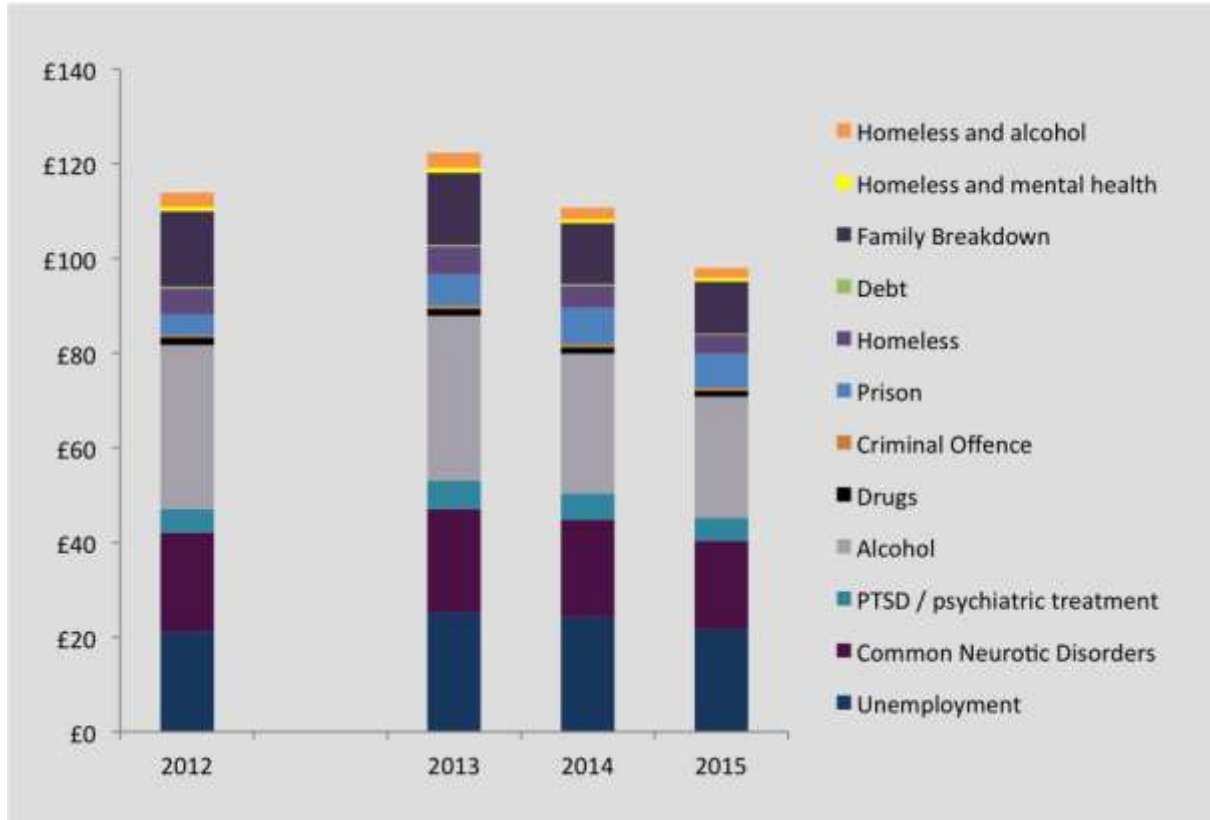
The costs of transition

The purpose of the modelling research and analysis was to identify the costs of poor transition to the UK as a whole. The development of the model was guided by two principles: count only the direct costs of transition to the British public and voluntary sectors; and be conservative in identifying costs. Our view, therefore, is that costs of transition identified by the modelling work are a minimum figure.



The mechanics of the model are explained in Chapter 5 of the report. The headlines are as follows:

Figure 1.2: Costs of poor transition (£ million), 2012-2015



Source: Forces in Mind Trust model/ The Futures Company

In the base line year, 2012, with 19,950 Service leavers, the model assesses the costs of poor transition as being £113.8 million. Alcohol misuse has the largest single effect, with costs of £35m, followed by mental health issues (“common neurotic disorders” together with PTSD) at £26m. Unemployment costs are £21m and family breakdown at £16m. Family breakdown may be understated by the model design.

Homelessness accounts for £5.5 million of costs, and prison £4.4 million. The research identifies that a relatively small number of Service leavers end up in prison, but the costs attaching to each individual who is jailed are very high.

Projected outflow numbers are higher in 2013 and 2014, but decline to 17,738 in 2015, at which point they are around the likely long-term annual outflow figure. The costs of poor transition climb to £122 million in 2013 and then decline to £111 million in 2014 and to £98 million in 2015. These costs follow the rise and fall in outflow numbers caused by Armed Forces redundancies under the Strategic Defence and Security Review (2010). It is therefore reasonable to assess the direct costs of poor transition to other public bodies and third sector agencies as being of the order of £100 million a year in the medium term. As noted above, these are conservative estimates.



Scenarios

The model is designed to enable different intervention scenarios to be tested to identify their impact on transition costs. One scenario explored in the report, for example, tests the impact of achieving for all ESLs the improvement in employment outcomes seen for those leavers who have participated in the pilot Future Horizons Programme at Catterick. The effect of this would be to reduce costs of poor transition by £9.5 million in 2013, £9.2 million in 2014, and £8.2 million in 2015. In practice, outcomes are likely to be better than this, because better employment outcomes are likely to lead to better outcomes in other areas as well, such as mental health outcomes.

The model has been designed to help assess the public sector benefit of interventions when policy is being formulated. The model is the property of the Forces in Mind Trust and FiMT is therefore in a position to run such scenarios if required.

Recommendations by theme

The full report contains 26 recommendations, which are listed at the end of the relevant chapters and in full in an Appendix. These are grouped by themes, which are summarised below.

- **Create transferable skills:** ensure that Service leavers have sufficient and appropriate skills and qualifications to prosper in the civilian world, and that these are in a form that is recognised by civilian employers. Specifically, this requires an increased focus on building a personal portfolio of skills during the Service career, and ensuring that this is transferable into the civilian world.
- **Create independence:** build habits of independence among Service leavers to help them adjust to the demands of the civilian world. Specifically, this involves allowing Service leavers to adapt over a longer period (for example, by ensuring a last posting close to home); more experience during transition of the civilian workplace through work placements; and increased financial awareness.
- **Personalise the pathway:** enable Service leavers to tailor their pathway out of the Services so that it matches their skills and experience to their aspirations. Specifically, the research suggests that tailored support during transition creates a distinctive difference to transition outcomes.
- **Engage with the family:** ensure both that the family does not get lost during transition and gets the help it needs, and that it is able to act as a source of support if needed. Effectively the family is transitioning at the same time as the Service leaver, but gets little support in this; and families (parents and siblings, as well as partners) are likely to be the first place a Service leaver experiencing transition difficulties will turn.
- **Track the right things:** develop deeper knowledge of the transition path, and where it does well or less well, in order to improve transition outcomes. At present transition data is largely about short- and medium-term employment outcomes. Relatively little is known about how poor transition outcomes influence each other (e.g., the impact of alcohol dependence on long-term employment).
- **Invest to reduce transition risk:** commit resources appropriately to reduce the public and social costs of poor transitions. A relatively small increase in resources directed at the transition of ESLs would appear to have a reasonably significant effect.



The use of thematic issues that group different recommendations is intended to improve focus and to make it easier to identify relevant stakeholders to facilitate appropriate action. The report contains a set of Guiding Principles that are intended to help organisations (e.g., in the voluntary sector) translate the recommendations into better design for their transition-related Services, and for leavers' awareness.

Improving transition from the leaver's perspective

From the Service leaver's perspective, a good transition appears to involve four elements, some internal, some external. These are as follows:

- **Engagement:** Service leavers have engaged with the transition process sufficiently early, so their psychological approach to transition is in sync with their transition timetable. They are more likely to have a future-facing attitude to their lives.
- **Familiarity:** Leavers have developed some familiarity with the civilian environment that they are moving into, whether this is the civilian workplace or the management of their day-to-day lives in the civilian world.
- **Resources:** Leavers have accessed the practical resources they need to be able to manage the transition. These include the material resources that cushion the Service leaver against adverse elements of transitioning.
- **Information:** Leavers have sufficient information before they leave and also know where to find further information afterwards.

Alternative models of transition support

Finally, the report notes that employee recruitment models in the civilian world have two significant features that are different from the current Services transition model.

- Employers pay recruitment services for providing them with personnel, not the other way around.
- As a result the employment support organisation needs to listen more to the employment market about the skills that are being looked for and the way they are expressed through qualifications and experience.

Without seeking to undermine the current provision of transition support, but noting that additional funding may improve outcomes for Service leavers who currently receive minimal transition support, the report suggests that an alternative model may be worth researching prior to the re-letting of the Career Transition Partnership in 2015.



Chapter 1: Introduction and background

“At the heart of a successful transition is a transition of identity; an emotional shift from being part of the Armed Forces to having a future as an individual in the civilian world”

Over the course of the last decade or so, there has been an increased awareness of the issues involved in Servicemen and Servicewomen transitioning from the Armed Forces to the civilian world. This can perhaps be dated from the formal statement in 2000 of the notion of the Armed Forces Covenant, which spelt out the reasons why—as a society—we should ensure that those who have served in the military are not disadvantaged by their time in the Services.¹

The processes necessary to improve transition from the Services to civilian life were initially outlined under the Ministry of Defence’s *Strategy for Veterans* was published in 2003.² This was developed as an element in the Command Paper, *The Nation’s Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their Families and Veterans* which was published in 2008.³

It is also possible to trace the wider factors at play. The Armed Forces have become more visible in public life, notably since the signing of the Good Friday agreement and more recently as a result of the military conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and their associated casualties.⁴ Newspapers have lent their support through high-visibility campaigns such as ‘Help for Heroes’.

At the same time, there has been increased awareness of the issues that ex-Service personnel face as a result of their time in the Armed Forces; and society has developed a greater appreciation of the psychological effects of conflict on personnel.

Following the Strategic Defence and Security Review (2010), the process of reducing the size of the Armed Forces began, and subsequent redundancies have moved some of the issues around transition to a more pressing state.

The Futures Company was commissioned by the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT), after an open tender process, to deliver a research project that comprised a number of elements which, when taken together, were designed to create a coherent view of how the transition process was perceived by stakeholders, and by Service and ex-Service personnel; and to identify Guiding Principles for good practice and recommendations for improvement of the transition process. A second stream of work was designed to quantify the costs of poor transition to the country as a whole, and to identify from these areas where there were opportunities for cost effective intervention.

In approaching this work, The Futures Company has combined a number of different research methods; the methodology is described in more detail in the Appendix.

¹ Ministry Of Defence (2000), *The Armed Forces Covenant*. Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/49469/the_armed_forces_covenant.pdf

² Ministry Of Defence (2003), *Strategy for Veterans*. Available at http://www.veterans-uk.info/pdfs/vets_programme/vetstrategy1.pdf

³ Ministry Of Defence (2008), *The Nation’s Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their Families and Veterans*. Available at http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm74/7424/7424.pdf-uk.info/pdfs/vets_programme/vetstrategy1.pdf

⁴ During the conflict in Northern Ireland, it was policy for military personnel not to wear uniform off-duty, to reduce the risk of their becoming a target as a result.



These include:

- A review of existing relevant research and data
- Interviews with relevant stakeholders, in the Services charity community, Whitehall and elsewhere, together with a workshop and a stakeholder survey
- An extensive piece of qualitative research, involving depth interviews and supporting research with individuals currently experiencing transition, and focus groups with family members
- Quantitative analysis designed to assess and model the measurable impact of poor transition, to improve the basis of policy formation in this area.

The definition of ‘veteran’

At present, the Ministry of Defence’s policy definition of a ‘veteran’ is anyone who has “served for at least a day in HM Armed Forces, whether as a Regular or a Reservist.”⁵ The Armed Forces Covenant, which formalised this definition, also spelt out the basis for transition support:

“The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty.”

Consequently:

“Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services.”

While this formulation is recent, the notion that sits behind it is not. Indeed, it is deeply embedded in Britain’s thinking about its military: as long ago as 1563, Elizabeth I proposed a weekly tax, so as to be able to reward soldiers returning to their homes after serving.

The fighting strength of personnel in the British Armed Forces is 179,800, across all three Services. In 2011/12, ‘outflow’—those leaving—represented 21,370, a figure slightly above the long-term average because of the reduction of the overall size of British Forces under the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR).⁶

Transition from the Armed Forces is intended to achieve a number of objectives. These are laid out in the MOD’s Strategy for Veterans, published in 2003.⁷

“The Strategy for Veterans involves three key pillars. These are to ensure that veterans receive:

- excellent preparation for a transition to civilian life following service
- support from the Government and voluntary sector where needed
- recognition of their contribution to society.”⁸

⁵ Ministry Of Defence (2000), *The Armed Forces Covenant*.

⁶ Ministry Of Defence/Defence Analytical Services and Advice (2012), *UK Defence Statistics Factsheet*. 2012 Edition.

⁷ Ministry Of Defence (2003), *Strategy for Veterans*.



It is worth observing here that not all ex-Services personnel recognise themselves as being ‘veterans’; the term does not have the same resonance as it does, for example, in the United States. Research by Burdett et al. found that “only half of all veterans in the ex-Services group described themselves as ‘veterans’.”⁹ For this reason we have not used the term in this report except where it was used by stakeholders or respondents in interviews during the research process.

There is a number of familiar issues that emerge quickly in any discussion of transition from the Services.

The first is that transition to other employment is, for almost all Service personnel, an inevitable element of Service life. Only a tiny proportion of those who join the Services are able to formally retire at the end of their Service career. For this reason it is sometimes said (and was said to us by stakeholders) that transition should start on the first day that a recruit joins their Service. This, however, is not always the case.

The second is that most transitions are successful.¹⁰ While the focus of this report is on less successful transitions, this represents a minority of Service leavers. Although news and research reports sometimes make strong claims on the scale of poor transition, in most cases transition works.

The third issue (which closely relates to the second) is that the resources that are invested by the Services into transition, and the processes followed, appear to contribute to these outcomes. In a majority of cases, Service personnel get reasonable notice of their transition. In some cases they are entitled to substantial resettlement and training support and the procedures in place to inform personnel about transition have been improved in recent years.

The outcome of this transition support, for those who are entitled to access to the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) Programme is that 85% are in work after six months. However, among Early Service Leavers, with less than four years, and who do not get CTP support, the figure is only 52%.¹¹

It should be noted here that most civilian companies are considerably less interested in the success of their outgoing staff in finding alternative work and a stable lifestyle than are the Armed Forces. (In the private sector, such support is typically limited to the duty of care around cases of redundancy.) The interest of the Armed Forces in supporting transition is rooted in the willingness of those who serve to kill, and be killed, in the service of the state.

⁸ Ministry Of Defence (2008), *The Nation’s Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their Families and Veterans*. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nation-s-commitment-cross-government-support-to-our-armed-forces-their-families-and-veterans--2>

⁹ Burdett, H., Woodhead, C., Iversen, A., et al., (2012) “Are You a Veteran?” *Understanding of the Term “Veteran” among UK Ex-Service Personnel A Research Note*. Available at <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/kcmhr/publications/assetfiles/veterans/burdett-2012-veterans.pdf>

¹⁰ National Audit Office (2007). *Ministry Of Defence: Leaving the Services, a Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General. HC618 Session 2006-2007*. Available at: <http://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2007/07/0607618.pdf>

¹¹ DASA has recently changed the way that CTP employment outcomes are calculated to align them with the Office of National Statistics. The employment figure is now calculated as a proportion of those who are in employment, those who are unemployed, and those who are economically inactive. Those with unknown employment outcomes are excluded from the calculation. This has the effect of reducing the employment outcome figure – typically in the low 90% range – that has been previously quoted. DASA (Defence Statistics (Health)), 2013, *Career Transition Partnership Annual Statistics: UK Regular Service Personnel Employment Outcomes, 2009/10 – 2011/12*.



Government policy documents outline the purpose of transition support, but do not define what represents a good transition from Services life to civilian life. For the purpose of this project, the following definition was developed with help from a group of stakeholders:

“A good transition is one that enables ex-Service personnel to be sufficiently resilient to adapt successfully to civilian life, both now and in the future. This resilience includes financial, psychological, and emotional resilience, and encompasses the ex-Service person and their immediate families.”

The purpose of the project

The purpose of this research project, therefore, is to understand the transition process as it currently stands, in practice, across the Services for both officers and Other Ranks, and to identify areas where it could be improved. In doing this we sought to look beyond the employment outcomes that are the current main metrics. To assess the full range of transition outcomes and their associated costs, the quantitative model has been developed that assesses 10 factors that could lead to less successful transitions, including (for example) unemployment, mental health issues, prison, alcohol dependency and family breakdown.

The existing resettlement arrangements are largely managed by the Career Transition Partnership [CTP] (a commercial partnership between Right Management and a number of third-sector Services charities) under a contract let by the Ministry of Defence. What follows is summarised from the government’s ‘Information for Service Leavers’.

Resettlement provision is graduated and largely depends on length of service. It is delivered in three tiers: a First Line at unit level, under which a resettlement information staff officer provides information about what is available and directs the Service leaver towards the help to which they are entitled; a Second Line, provided by the individual Services at regional level, through a resettlement adviser; and a Third Line, comprising the tri-service resettlement support provided by the CTP.

All Service personnel on the trained strength are eligible to see a First Line and Second Line officer for information and advice on resettlement. All personnel “also have access to briefs on housing advice.”¹²

Entitlement to Third Line services is dependent on length of service. Those who have completed four years or more service are entitled to “an employment support programme”, while those who have completed six years or more “are entitled to the full service.”

Finally, a range of special services are available for those discharged for medical reasons, regardless of their length of service.¹³

Out of scope

A number of areas are out of scope for this research. We have not looked at transition issues affecting Reservists, who effectively go through a form of transition between military and non-military life every time they are deployed. We note, however, the evidence that this does have consequences for them

¹² Ministry Of Defence (2012), *Information for Service Leavers*. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/information-for-service-leavers>.

¹³ Ibid.



and we anticipate, with Reservists due to play a larger role in maintaining Britain’s fighting strength, that this could usefully be the subject of a separate study.

Second, we have not spoken directly to employers about their perspectives of ex-Service personnel’s transition. Some employers are well aware of the pool of potential employees represented by ex-Service personnel, and are well-connected to organisations active in this area of post-Services employment, including the CTP. We have spoken to people working for these organisations in the course of the research.

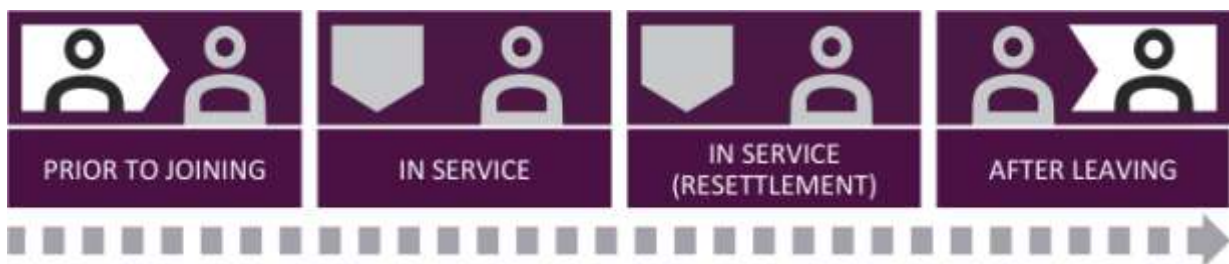
Nor have we sought to evaluate the performance of organisations such as the CTP, or of other organisations involved in the transition process. We note here that only a proportion of ex-Service personnel get the benefit of the full extent of CTP support, and that the CTP has a high degree of success in getting this proportion into employment.

Finally, in conducting the research interviews with individuals going through the transition process and in defining the modelling work, we limited our research to the first three years after leaving the Armed Forces. This is longer than the two-year period of support available under the CTP, but not much so. Any cut-off point is to some extent arbitrary. While there is some evidence suggesting that ex-Service personnel can have adverse experiences related to their Services life some years after leaving, it becomes harder as time passes to distinguish between effects connected to Services life and those which are the result of background or upbringing. At the same time, however, we settled on a three-year window to allow for some understanding of the second order effects of transition: employment is not the only measure of success.

The transition framework used in this report

Inevitably, any discussion of transition leads back through the individual’s Service career. As Matt Fossey observes, “A veteran’s journey begins on the day that they enlist with the Armed Forces.”¹⁴ A number of stakeholders made the same point, and with good reason. A Services career is very rarely a job for life and on average Services personnel serve for around 10 years.

Figure 1.3: The Transition Journey



Source: The Futures Company

For the purposes of this report, therefore, and in researching transition with ex-Services personnel, we have taken a whole career view of transition. While there are a number of factors that indicate whether transition will be better rather than worse, an important one is mind-set: the earlier a

¹⁴ Matt Fossey (2010), *Across The Wire*, Centre for Mental Health.



member of the Armed Forces starts to engage with the fact that they will leave, sooner or later, the better their outcome is.

Accordingly the structure of this report follows, period by period, the transition journey illustrated above. The work done across the research process as a whole—stakeholder engagement, literature review, and the qualitative research done with those experiencing transition—has been grouped under the relevant periods. The bulk of the research for this project is concentrated in the final two periods, covering the final resettlement period in the Armed Forces (up to two years), and the time after leaving. Inevitably these latter chapters are longer.

The insight from the modelling has been gathered into Chapter 5. A final section brings together both recommendations for change and also a set of Guiding Principles that should inform investment in improving the experience of transition and reducing its impact.

There are some recurring themes in the research, which are reflected in the report.

- At risk of stating the obvious, transition experiences vary greatly, and no two journeys are the same. However, there are commonalities. Transition is significantly influenced both by the individual's attitude and approach to it, and by the wider social context of the ex-Service personnel, both during their period in the Armed Forces and prior to joining them, not just by their military experience.
- The differences between military life and civilian life should not be underestimated. Even for people whose background and military experience give them a strong chance of finding relevant, rewarding and appropriate work outside of the Armed Forces, the cultural expectations of civilian life can still be a steep learning curve once people leave the Armed Forces.
- Families matter. The extent to which an ex-Service person's family is able to help with the transition process is a strong indicator of likely success. The research suggests that ex-Service personnel whose partners or spouses are already working in the civilian world are likely to transition better. Conversely, for some families resettlement represents a "double transition." But it remains difficult for families to gain access to post-transition help.
- Financial awareness is important. It is possible to live within a financial cocoon whilst in service, in which the basics of living, such as food and accommodation, are both subsidised and deducted from pay at source. For some, the cost of living is as much of a shock as the process of managing money.
- There is work that can be done to improve the quality and the consistency of the transition experience, which remains uneven. Much of this needs to be done during the resettlement period prior to discharge. Nevertheless, the difference between a manageable transition and a poor one can come down to moments when the safety net provided by charities for ex-Service personnel either works, or fails to work. But this safety net is hard to navigate even by those who understand it.



Definitions

The following definitions are used in this report.

Transition: ‘Transition’ is used to describe the period of reintegration into civilian life from the Armed Forces. For the purposes of this report it is taken to start with the point in service at which Service personnel start their resettlement process and then continues, as explained above, for three years from discharge.

Resettlement: In this report, Resettlement describes the formal processes and procedures by which transition is managed, and the formal support provided to Service leavers during transition. It starts with the activation of the Resettlement process and continues until the end of Resettlement provision (i.e. for those with CTP support, until two years after discharge date, earlier for others).

Early Service Leaver (ESL): ESL covers those who get only the minimum resettlement support. ESLs are defined by the Ministry of Defence as “Service Leavers who are discharged (a) compulsorily from the trained strength or untrained strength and lose entitlement to resettlement provision ... they would otherwise have because of the circumstances of their discharge. (b) at their own request from the trained strength or untrained strength, having completed less than 4 years’ service.”¹⁵

Veteran vs. ex-Service personnel: For the purposes of this report, these are used inter-changeably. However, for the reasons outlined above, we have avoided using the word ‘veteran’ in text that we have written. It does appear in quotes from other research, stakeholder interviews, and input and from some of the research from ex-Service personnel.

“Successful”/“unsuccessful” transition: We have sought to avoid binary distinctions between “successful” and “unsuccessful” or “good” and “bad” transitions. It is also clear from our research that employment—sometimes taken as a benchmark for successful transition—is only one indicator of successful transition. It is a useful one, because of the things that flow from it (e.g., regular income) that stabilise other aspects of civilian life. Yet it has its own problems; for example, it can disguise issues of under-employment or over-qualification, and other aspects of post-military life that can lead to poor adjustment to civilian life in the medium to longer term, such as alcohol dependency or mental health issues. At the same time, the area of transition is one of many shades of grey. There are transitions that are objectively poor or unsuccessful, and we came across at least one in our own research with personnel undergoing transition, but it is a small proportion.

¹⁵ Ministry of Defence (2013), *JSP 534 The Tri-Service Resettlement Manual*, (Issue 10, Feb 2013). Available at <http://www.ctp.org.uk/assets/x/52802>



Chapter 2: Prior to resettlement



From the research, we have identified that a number of the issues that play out during and after resettlement and discharge have their roots earlier, in the routines and patterns of life in the Services, and sometimes in the circumstances of the ex-Service personnel before they join the Armed Forces. In this chapter we explore these issues.

In 2011/12 the Armed Forces 'inflow' (recruitment) represented 14,800 people, split as follows across the three Services (Army, Royal Air Force, Royal Navy):

2011/12	Officers	Other Ranks	Total
All Services	1,070	13,730	14,800
<i>of which</i>			
Royal Navy	280	1,940	2,220
Army	710	10,840	11,190
RAF	80	1,310	1,390

Recruitment is often a long process and individuals may have expressed an interest in joining while still at school, or come into the Armed Forces after experience in a youth organisation such as the cadet forces. Gatekeepers such as parents and or teachers are often influential. Equally, some join because their work options in civilian life are limited.

Of the Army recruits, up to 50% have literacy and numeracy skills below Entry Level 3, equivalent to the standard expected of primary school leavers at age 11.¹⁶ The comparable figures for the Navy and Royal Air Force are much lower, representing only one to three per cent of their recruits).¹⁷ More broadly, the nature of infantry recruitment means that the Army is more likely to recruit from poorer and less well educated social groups.¹⁸

¹⁶ J. Vorhaus, J. Swain, B. Creese, et al. (2012) *Armed Forces Basic Skills Longitudinal Study*. Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-basic-skills-longitudinal-study-part-1>

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The disparity in literacy is also likely affected by the fact that the Army, relative to the Navy and RAF, recruits a much higher number of foreign nationals (some 9,000 serving in the Army, compared to only a few hundred in either the Navy or the RAF). Many of these recruits therefore have specific ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) needs.



Behavioural traits seen prior to joining the Armed Forces are also likely to manifest themselves in Service life as well. A recent report from King's College London found that UK Armed Forces recruits reporting pre-enlistment anti-social behaviour were much more likely to show negative behaviour whilst in the Services, including severe alcohol misuse, violence, and general anger and irritability.¹⁹ There have been similar findings in studies carried out in the United States.²⁰

At the same time, however, recent research on the morale of Armed Forces' recruits found that although childhood adversity had a significant effect on a recruit's morale, current service factors (for example, where an individual was deployed) had a much greater influence.²¹

Of course, the Services invest considerable resource in improving, where necessary, literacy and numeracy skills, and on developing new skills. However, there is little evidence about the impact the Services have in modifying behaviour once personnel have joined. Specifically, the Centre for Mental Health's *Across the Wire* report states: "Not enough information is known about demographics of recruitment and what the Armed Forces might have done to improve the life chances of young people who may have otherwise not had the opportunities, skills and training afforded by joining up."²²

Furthermore, where individuals do gain new qualifications (such as NVQs), there are questions in some cases about the value of these in the civilian world, and in others about the difficulty in adapting qualifications gained in the military to the non-military environment. Stakeholders have told us that there had been substantial progress in recent years (in particular in the area of training and education), but this is an area which is generally under researched. It is also worth noting that there is a significant cost, for the Services as a whole, attached to individuals who are recruited but who then fail to complete their training.

Transition issues

There are several transition issues that emerge from the in-service years prior to resettlement and from the life of the individual prior to joining the Armed Forces. These can be summarised under the following headings:

Skills and education: as discussed above, this covers the extent to which recruits who are under educated or unskilled when they join improve their education levels while in the Services; the extent to which qualifications and certificates gained in the Services are recognised outside the Armed Forces; and the extent to which vocational qualifications gained in the Armed Forces are valued outside.

Expectations and expectation management: the extent to which those leaving the Services are ready for life outside is partly down to the individual themselves. Some have prepared themselves, partly by ensuring that they have the qualifications they need and partly by ensuring that they have some

¹⁹ MacManus, D., Dean, K., Iversen, A., et al., (2012) "Impact of pre-enlistment antisocial behaviour on behavioural outcomes among UK military personnel". *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology*, 47 (8): 1353-58. Available through: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22038568>

²⁰ Fontana, A., and Rosenheck, R., (2005), "The role of war-zone trauma and PTSD in the etiology of antisocial behavior". *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 193 (9): 584. Available through: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15729111>

²¹ Murphy, D., and Sharp, D., (2011) *Exploring pre-enlistment and military factors associated with the morale of members of the UK Armed Forces*. King's Centre for Military Health Research. *Military Medicine*, 176 (1): 13-8. Available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21305954>

²² Fossey, Matt, (2010) *Across the Wire*. Centre for Mental Health. Available at: http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/publications/across_the_wire.aspx?ID=623



savings in place. As we discuss in the following chapters, Service leavers whose spouses or partners are working in the civilian world typically have more reliable expectations.

Financial awareness: It is possible to be in the Services and have little awareness of finances or financial management skills. Payments for housing—for those living in MOD accommodation—are deducted directly from pay, as is the cost of meals for those in single accommodation, which are also subsidised. (In married accommodation, personnel buy their food separately.) Healthcare is both more accessible and provided free of charge. The higher living costs, and wider range of things that are charged for at the point of purchase, can come as a shock to people who are also juggling a new job and adapting to life in a civilian environment.

Services culture: There are strong differences between cultures of the different Services, and also between the Armed Forces and the non-military world. Some of these reflect the directive nature of military deployment; some that the military workplace is still dominated by men, whereas the non-military workplace is far more feminised. Stakeholders noted that the military remains a closed world with its own language and behaviours. In terms of effective transition, one of the biggest differences is that the Armed Forces have drinking cultures and increasingly the world of civilian work does not.

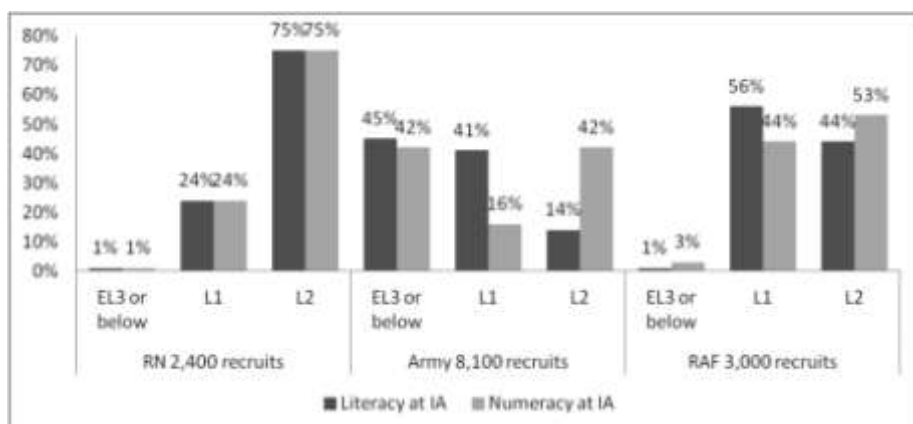
Mental health issues: Adjustment to civilian life partly depends on one’s psychological wellbeing. This is influenced by deployment, in two ways that are unexpected. The first is that depression has a more profound effect on ex-Service personnel’s state of mind than post-traumatic stress or other forms of combat shock. The second is that intensity of deployment (the balance between time deployed and time at home) has as much impact as its duration. There are differences between different types of troops.

In the following section we will review each of these in turn.

1. Skills and qualifications

Close to half of Army recruits (as opposed to Navy or RAF recruits) are classified as having literacy and numeracy skills of Level 3 and below, equivalent to the expected reading and numerate age of an 11 year old as they leave primary school.

Figure 2.1: Literacy and numeracy levels among Armed Forces recruits by Service



Source: Vorhaus, J., Swain, J., Creese, B., et al. (2012) *Armed Forces Basic Skills Longitudinal Study*²³

²³ Vorhaus, J., Swain, J., Creese, B., et al., (2012) *Armed Forces Basic Skills Longitudinal Study*. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-basic-skills-longitudinal-study-part-1>



This is an issue because those who joined with low skills and educational levels and leave without having built on these are more likely to have difficulties in civilian life. Their transition problems are likely to be compounded if they have few plans for their lives after they leave the Armed Forces; as one stakeholder observed to us:

“Those with limited skills who enter young struggle the most and some end up in prison or homeless quite quickly.” (Stakeholder interview)

To some extent, the skills issue is also a reflection of the age of recruits when they join and therefore in turn reflects expectations and other life experience. It is clear that the level of education and qualifications Service personnel achieve prior to joining the Armed Forces can impact the success of transition; those who have gained higher education (such as a university degree) are likely to be more employable and find it easier to get a job when they come to leave compared to those who have gained fewer qualifications (e.g., a couple of GCSEs and nothing else).

In addition, it appears that those who have been through higher education prior to joining are generally less anxious during transition as they feel more confident about being able to gain employment when they leave. Those with few qualifications can feel limited in terms of what alternative employment is possible for them outside of the Armed Forces and can therefore be more fearful about leaving.

Effectively many of those who have the worst transitions show a combination of reinforcing factors. They are young when they enter the Services; they come from disadvantaged backgrounds; they join with poor literacy and low skills levels. Conversely, the Services create opportunities for some who have failed in, or been failed by, the education system:

“Infantry men with no qualifications and low literacy skills are vulnerable. ... [the Army] tends to recruit from deprived areas and is a stopgap for some, but the making of others.” (Stakeholder interview)

The Armed Forces run extensive apprenticeship schemes. In addition, there is a formal commitment to lifelong learning within the Services, supported by schemes such as the MOD’s Standard Learning Credit scheme, which provides financial support for “small-scale” learning activities, and the Enhanced Learning Credits Scheme, which promotes access to “higher level learning” such as NVQ Level three or above in England and Wales.^{24,25} In April this year, an Ofsted evaluation of vocational training graded most training as ‘Good’, with Catering graded higher. These grades were an improvement on the previous Ofsted evaluation of ‘Satisfactory’.²⁶

However, there is a number of issues:

- The Armed Forces state that there are significant numbers of personnel undergoing vocational training at any one time. Yet when the Forces Select Foundation surveyed ex-Service personnel

²⁴ JSP 898 (2012), The enhanced learning credit scheme: sponsorship of service personnel for personal development, UNCONTROLLED COPY, PART 4 – CHAPTER 3, Policy Sponsor: TESR – AHd Resettlement (SO2 Skills). October 12, Issue 2.4.

Available at

[http://www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/media/universityoflincoln/businesslaw/military/Joint,Service,Publication,\(JSP\),898,Part,4,Chapter,3.pdf](http://www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/media/universityoflincoln/businesslaw/military/Joint,Service,Publication,(JSP),898,Part,4,Chapter,3.pdf)

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Ofsted (2013), report on Directorate of Educational and Training Services (Army) Army Apprenticeships. Available at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/54805>



for a report in 2011, the proportion that said they had received vocational training was only 43% of the total; more than half had not.²⁷

- The type of vocational training: there are different criticisms of the vocational training provided by the Armed Forces by stakeholders and others. Some perceive the vocational training as being overly geared to the needs of the military, and therefore of less use in the civilian world. Some argue that the Services have not engaged sufficiently with civilian employers about their employment needs, with the result that even where vocational qualifications are delivered with substantial civilian components, they may still not be what civilian employers are looking for.
- In the drive for vocational qualifications there is insufficient focus on general employability. This is especially true of less educated recruits who are also more likely to be ESLs. As the *One Step Forward* report notes, over 13,000 NVQs were awarded at Level Two across the Armed Forces in 2009-10, but employers do not value NVQs as a substitute for GCSEs. The authors of *One Step Forward* quote Professor Alison Wolf, whose report on vocational education for the Department of Education found that NVQs at Level Two 'do not appear to have any positive outcomes whatsoever in terms of earnings and career progression'; the wages of individuals bearing these qualifications are no higher, on average, than those of people with no qualifications at all.²⁸ Further, Wolf noted that in terms of social mobility the standard which created general opportunities of mobility for young people were GCSE grades A* to C.
- Stakeholders also questioned the transferability of skills gained in the Armed Forces to the civilian world. This finding also emerged from the *Joining Forces* report: "Over two thirds of Servicemen and women with a track record of vocational qualifications who took part in our research found that the practical application of their learning into a civilian setting was much more difficult than they thought it would be when they were in service. These ex-Service personnel typically stated that they did not find that their military qualifications were easily "transferable" to civilian employers."

2. Expectations

Because the Armed Forces commits substantial amounts towards training and development of their personnel, it is possible for people to make good previous educational deficits during their Service career, although there is dispute over the extent to which some qualifications gained in the Services are applicable in the civilian context. The extent to which individuals take these opportunities is partly a reflection of their psychological approach to their time in the Armed Forces.

Those who perceive the Armed Forces as a job or a career tend to be better prepared for transition. They accept from the start that they will one day leave the Services and move on to other work outside of them. This mind-set enables them to see their period in the Services as one part of a longer personal plan. They make more of their time in Service by taking the opportunities offered to develop their skills and qualifications. For example, from the qualitative research:

"I had an initial 4 year plan to get 5 GCSEs so I would come out with something. To me the Army was a good way to get qualifications and trade training." (Male, End of engagement, Army)

²⁷ Forces Watch, London, and Child Soldiers International, *One Step Forward, The case for ending recruitment of minors by the British armed forces* (2013). London. Available at http://www.child-soldiers.org/research_report_reader.php?id=650

²⁸ Ibid.



Those who view the Services as an option in itself, in contrast, tend not to look beyond their Services career, which makes them unprepared for leaving:

“I was on minimum wage, no real job and happened to speak to someone who recommended the Navy so I joined. I was comfortable—no real plans. I live for today, I don’t plan ahead.” (Male, Medical discharge, Navy)

“The Army did offer me lots, but I didn’t take it as I was more interested in drinking.” (Male, Early Release, Army)

Those who have planned least and lived most for the moment are likely to have most difficulty in transitioning successfully, if only because they will be less equipped and less prepared for life in the non-military world. It’s a simple point, but this stakeholder represents many that we spoke to:

“Probably the more unsuccessful transitions are those with less education or without a skill. You have more transferable skills as an engineer than infantry.” (Stakeholder interview)

Acquiring a skills portfolio and instilling a culture of personal development while in the Services will help lead to a more successful transition out of the Armed Forces, if only because it will increase employability. The personal development plan should be a more central part of the individual objectives of every member of the Armed Forces. The largest impact—depending on the design of the intervention—is likely to be on those who join with the lowest educational levels.

Making sure individuals are aware that they need to take responsibility for their own futures and make the most of the opportunities in the Armed Forces is important but hard to enforce. Nonetheless, communicating this message from the start of the individual’s military career is critical, so that Service personnel have time to acquire skills to position themselves better for their transition.

“You need to prepare people as soon as they are in the Forces and provide a programme which changes the nearer you get to exiting ... They have to have a willingness to learn and how far does responsibility go? You can only give opportunities.” (Stakeholder interview)

“The optimal transition would be that you start the day after you join with the understanding that you will leave and take advantage of everything. There isn’t too early. Around one per cent go full career to 55 years. People need to start earlier.” (Stakeholder interview)

Understanding recruits’ reasons for joining the Armed Forces and their mind-set when entering are critical to success in this task. At present there are little data on this.

3. Financial awareness

A theme of the stakeholder interviews was about the lack of preparedness of Service personnel for the costs of civilian life. Some of the costs of military life are subsidised, in effect, and others are partly hidden from view because they are deducted directly from the pay packet (where the subsidised deductions are shown). It is possible to get by in the Armed Forces with a relatively unsophisticated approach to managing one’s income because accommodation and food are effectively covered.

“I used to live like a king for two weeks and a pauper for two weeks—we’d go out spending everything, then run out of money, but we would always still have a roof over our head and meals provided, so it didn’t matter.” (Male, Army, Voluntary Early Release).



Stakeholders suggested that some Service personnel were less interested in financial issues prior to resettlement, and research respondents acknowledged this. There are structural issues that individuals need to address earlier. The point of discharge is an expensive moment for the ex-Service personnel, as landlords require deposit payments and many utilities providers require upfront payments or deposits too. The cost of living in the civilian world is higher, and looking for work can take longer than anticipated. Sometimes there are costs for further training.

“Financial awareness and management are particular issues people struggle with; they have everything provided for them and can spend any money they earn but then tell them they need to pay rent, council tax and need to budget and they find it difficult.” (Stakeholder interview)

Without some financial planning it is easy to disappear into debt under the waves of financial demands, typically with knock-on consequences for family or relationships. Some plan ahead to provide themselves a cushion against their discharge:

“I had a four year plan so started saving in regiment, putting money aside each month.” (Male, End of engagement, Army)

In the past there have been specific issues relating to service in the Armed Forces and credit checks and approvals, because the credit checking system is based on post codes, and these did not exist for BFPO addresses or UK military bases. As of April 2012, the Ministry of Defence and the Post Office introduced a ‘shadow’ post coding system to resolve this issue, and the situation has improved since then.

4. Services culture

The Armed Forces are a different world from the civilian world. This is, in part, inevitable because of their specific role and purpose. One of the reasons that the military ethos is effective in combat situations is because combat units have a strong command structure and because members of the fighting unit know (without having to think about it) that in the heat of battle they are able to rely on each other. If these two elements start to be questioned the fighting unit starts to unravel. The rhythms of work are also very different, with periods of extended engagement (on deployment or on manoeuvres) interspersed with periods with a more relaxed work regime. It also remains a male-dominated world, even allowing for increasing numbers of women who now serve.

In contrast, in the civilian world notions of hierarchy have diluted over the last two decades. Decisions can appear to emerge rather than being made clearly; instructions relating to decisions can lack clarity for those who are unused to the workings of the civilian world and workplace. Although there are exceptions, in general, the civilian workplace is largely less directive than the military workplace.

In summary, stakeholders argued to us that there is a greater culture of dependence within the Armed Forces, meaning that personnel were less likely to need to take responsibility for managing the day-to-day detail of their lives. This meant that when personnel come to leave they can find the experience of adjustment to civilian life and work overwhelming.

“I’m not sure people are prepared enough to leave institutionalised life to civvy life,” one stakeholder told us. “Some people find it more challenging, especially those with no social network, no kids, not married, they have a solitary existence. They don’t have a network when they leave and they have to do things themselves.”

Or again, from a different stakeholder: *“The issue veterans have is having to think for themselves.”*



This issue, of how best to create a greater sense of self-reliance was a theme in a number of the interviews and came up in the stakeholder workshop. It is clear that turning attention to it in the resettlement period is probably too late. Exposure to civilian life and workplaces from time to time during a Services career, perhaps in the form of workplace ‘attachments’ to sympathetic employers that have a relationship with the Armed Forces, would help individuals calibrate their expectations of work outside of the Services long prior to resettlement, make them better informed about skills and qualifications required to succeed, create relationships and ease the adjustment needed when they reach the end of their military engagement.

Figure 2.2: ‘You know you’re a squaddie when...

“You know you’re a Squaddie when
Your civvie mates don't understand any of the terminology you use such as “no dramas”, “squared away”, “take a knee” etc.
You can't help saying "Roger", "Say again" and other snappy bits of VP.
You use acronyms thinking your civvie mates will understand what you are talking about.
You cringe, and mutter under your breath 'haircut', when you see men with long hair.
You walk at a ridiculous pace and are physically incapable of walking at the shopping pace of your girlfriend.
You refer to personal organisation as "admin".
Your girlfriend is stored in your mobile phone address book as “Zero Alpha”.
You use patrol hand signals in a night club if people can't hear you.
You always use the 24 hour clock....
Nothing soldiers do shocks you any more....
You can't watch war movies without giving a running commentary.
People in prison have more contact with women than you do....
Whenever you spell something out you use the phonetic alphabet....
You don't trust your mum/wife/girlfriend/any woman to iron your kit because deep down you think that your ironing is better...
You've seen this list about twenty times.”

Source: Adapted from www.shrimperzone.com

5. Mental health issues

Many ESLs report mental wellbeing issues after leaving: a research review conducted on behalf of The Royal British Legion suggests that a quarter of younger ESLs suffer from depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder related to their time in Service.²⁹ Once they have been discharged these symptoms can be compounded by an ESL's lack of transferable skills and unemployment, as is discussed later in the report. Again, factors from their pre-Service life can—after departure—increase the likelihood of social exclusion. Specifically, younger former soldiers (aged 24 and below) have a significantly higher rate of suicide than the average for their age cohort (between 1.7 and 2.9 times at different ages).³⁰ The researchers state that the risk of suicide is at its highest in the two years after discharge.

Some of this evidence suggests that more care needs to be taken during the recruitment phase to identify factors that could lead to poor outcomes following discharge.

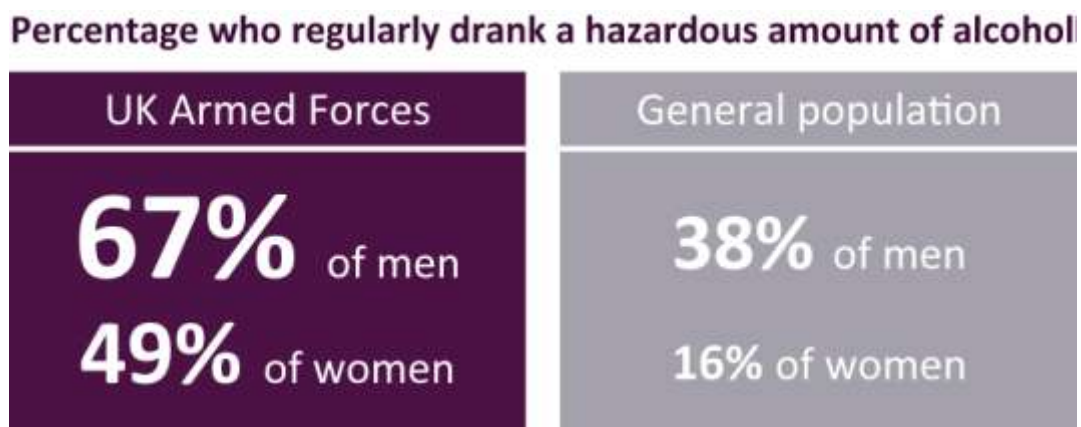
²⁹ Rhodes, D., Pleace, N., and Fitzpatrick, S., (2006). *The numbers and characteristics of homeless ex-service people in London*. Available at www.britishlegion.org.uk/media/33475/homelessexserviceinlondon.pdf.

³⁰ Kapur, N., While, D., Blatchley N., Bray, I., Harrison, K., (2009), *Suicide after Leaving the UK Armed Forces - A Cohort Study*. Available at <http://www.plosmedicine.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000026>



In addition, research by the King’s Centre for Military Health Research [KCMHR], which is following a large longitudinal cohort, suggests that deployment patterns have particular effects on mental health. The conventional wisdom is that the duration of deployment should have the biggest psychological effects. One King’s study has found “that spending more than six months away from family and friends, and having these periods unexpectedly extended, can have adverse effects on deployed personnel’s health and wellbeing, and on the wellbeing of their families. The effects are even greater for deployments lasting longer than a year.”³¹ A second study also suggests that intensity of deployment (effectively the length of recovery time between deployments) also has a significant impact on mental health. Deployment for more than 12 months in 36 has adverse effects on those deployed: “a consistent association was found between prolonged deployments [13 months or more in the past three years] and problems at home both during and after deployment.”³² Historically, this time period has been an Army guideline in military planning;³³ the King’s data seems to support this.

Figure: Hazardous alcohol consumption by role and gender



Source: N.T. Fear, A. Iversen, H. Melzer, et al (2007). *Patterns of drinking in the UK Armed Forces*.

Another factor that can influence mental wellbeing is the level of alcohol consumption. Alcohol is well known as a facilitator of—in particular—male bonding and it is not surprising that in an environment where bonding is essential to success that alcohol consumption is encouraged.^{34 35} However, this can lead to alcohol dependency and has consequences for behaviour which can seem out of place in the civilian world. Research from a large-scale study by the King’s Centre for Military health found that the proportion of Armed Forces personnel who regularly consumed a hazardous amount of alcohol was much higher than the general population.³⁶ KCMHR revisited this subject in the context of research

³¹ Buckman, J. E. J., Sundin, J., Greene, T., et al. (2010), “The impact of deployment lengths on the health and well-being of military personnel: a systematic review of the literature”. *Occup Environ Med*. Available at <http://oem.bmj.com/content/68/1/69.full>

³² Rona, R. J., Fear, N. T., Hull, L., et al. (2007), “Mental health consequences of overstretch in the UK armed forces: first phase of a cohort study.” *BMJ* 2007;335:603. Available at <http://www.bmj.com/content/335/7620/603>

³³ Private conversation during UK Army scenarios project, 2001-02.

³⁴ Interview, Anne Fox, anthropologist (2012).

³⁵ Browne, T., Iversen, A., Hull, L., et al., (2008), ‘How do experiences in Iraq affect alcohol use amongst male UK armed forces personnel?’ *Occup Environ Med*. 2008 Sep;65(9):628-33.

³⁶ Fear, N.T., Iversen, A., Meltzer, H., et al., (2007), *Patterns of drinking in the UK Armed Forces*. Academic Centre for Defence Mental Health, King’s College London. *Addiction* 102: 1749-1759. Available through: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17935583>



into the impact of deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan on mental health.³⁷ In summary, they found that “Symptoms of common mental disorders and alcohol misuse remain the most frequently reported mental disorders in UK armed forces personnel”. In evidence to the Defence Select Committee, General Berragan, Director General Personnel, Land Command MoD, quoted the prevalence of alcohol misuse in the general population as being 6%, compared with 13% in the military.³⁸ This tallies with other reviews of alcohol use in the military. A research review by Alcohol Concern reported that an alcohol treatment agency in Wales found that ex-Service personnel comprise one-fifth of their clients, considerable larger than the proportion of ex-Service people in the Welsh population as a whole.³⁹ Alcohol Concern also noted informal initiatives to reduce alcohol consumption within the Armed Forces.

At the same time, however, it should also be noted that drug use in the Services is lower than the population as a whole. We believe that this is likely to be because of the zero-tolerance policy adopted by the Services towards drugs use, the random drug-testing within the Armed Forces, and the individual risk of dishonourable discharge arising from a failed drugs test.

Risk factors

In summary, a number of stakeholders asserted the value of identifying risk factors of poor transition in advance, both during the recruitment phase and during time in the Armed Forces. In particular, more knowledge of an individual’s background when they are recruited would permit a more needs based approach to transition. The purpose of this would be to ensure those more likely to be at risk of a poor transition receive appropriate support.

³⁷ Fear, N., Jones, M., Murphy, D., et al., (2010). *What are the consequences of deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan on the mental health of the UK armed forces? A cohort study*. Available through:

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/kcmhr/publications/assetfiles/iraqafghan/Fear2010-consequencesofdeployment.pdf>

³⁸ House of Commons Defence Select Committee, House of Commons Defence Committee (2011), *The Armed Forces Covenant in Action? Part 1: Military Casualties: Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2010–12*. Available at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmdfence/762/76205.htm#n55>

³⁹ Alcohol Concern Cymru (2012). *On the front line. Alcohol Concern Cymru Briefing*. Available at <http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk/assets/files/Wales%20factsheets/On-the-front-line.pdf>



Summary of risk factors prior to resettlement

MORE AT RISK	LESS AT RISK
The Armed Forces perceived as a lifestyle	The Armed Forces perceived as a career/job—enter with foresight
No other option (dependent on the Armed Forces, lack of alternatives, not much else going on for them)	Considered choice (in control of their destiny, other choices available to them outside of the Armed Forces)
Joined at 17 years (little life experience)	Join the Armed Forces after gaining some life experience
Poorly equipped for transition, likely to need support after discharge	Better equipped for transition, in less need of support

Recommendations

These are also grouped together in Chapter 6, where we are able to show connections between interventions at each stage of the transition process, and are listed in full in the Appendix.

Recommendation 2.1 Pre-joining profiling. As part of the recruitment screening, candidates should be profiled for their aptitude for personal development. This should be a factor in recruitment; it is likely to produce better outcomes both during their time in the Armed Forces and afterwards.

Recommendation 2.2 Personal skills programme. As part of each individual's objectives, they are required to develop a personal skills programme, to build up skills that are valuable both during their military career and after.

Recommendation 2.3 Increase alignment of military vocational training with civilian skills. At present some of the Armed Forces' vocational training is too geared towards military skills. Some is aimed too low, with the level of attainment not valued by employers. The Ministry of Defence should collaborate with employers to align its vocational courses more closely.

Recommendation 2.4 Financial awareness training. The Armed Forces is a cushioned world in which the full costs of accommodation and food, in particular, are not always clearly visible to the individual, and are sometimes subsidised. In any case, this means very low levels of awareness among Service personnel of the actual cost of living. Awareness training would help. The timing of this is critical: it needs to be close enough to the resettlement period to have some resonance but far enough ahead of discharge for individuals to develop the necessary personal financial management skills.

Recommendation 2.5 Savings programme. Military personnel have the same access to savings programmes as non-military, but because the period immediately after leaving the military is expensive (quickly requiring deposits for housing and other services), they have more need to build up some savings. A structured savings programme would help.



Recommendation 2.6 Reduce intensity of deployment. Intensity of deployment, not duration (the number of months in a given time period), is more likely to create adverse mental health outcomes. This issue is expected to diminish as the UK withdraws from Afghanistan and the nature of its military commitments changes. However, guidance on maximum proportion of time deployed should be strongly enforced.

Recommendation 2.7: No individual left behind. Any Serviceman or Servicewoman who serves a four year term should leave with GCSEs in Maths and English, which creates a platform for employability.



Chapter 3: Resettlement

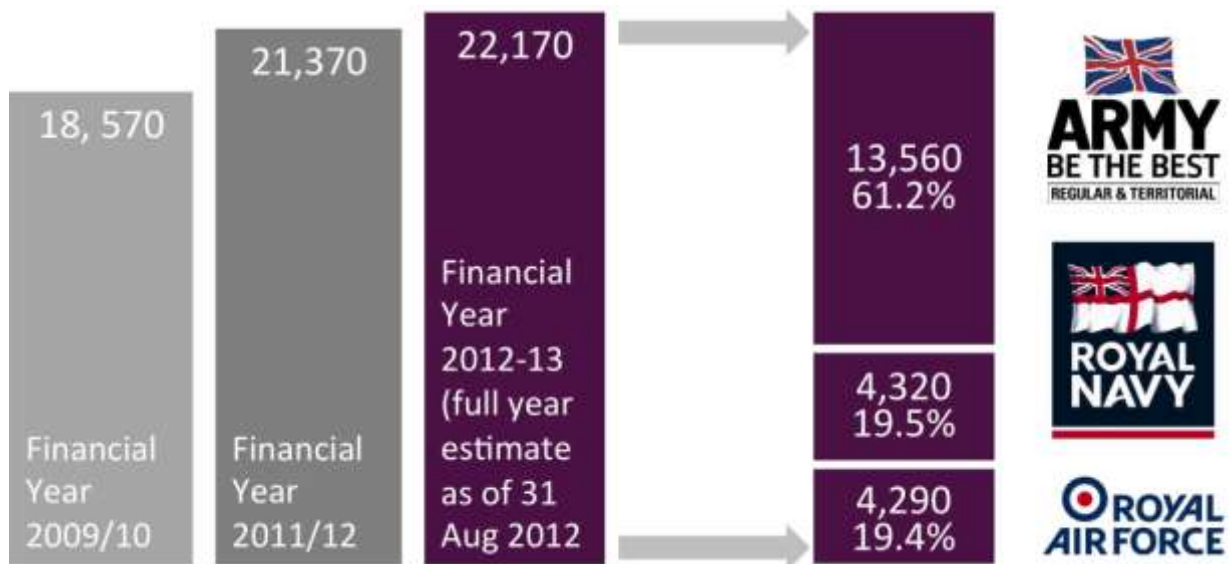


Background

Around 18,000 personnel leave the Armed Forces every year, although the figure for 2011/12 and the following years will be higher than this as the redundancies announced under the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) work through the system. The purpose of resettlement, according to the Tri-Service Resettlement Manual, is to allow “our people to serve secure in the knowledge that they will receive ample assistance to prepare them for life and future employment when they finally leave the Services.”⁴⁰

The outflows for the past three years are shown in the following chart:

Figure 3.1: Armed Forces outflows 2009/10-1012/13



Source: DASA, UK *Defence Statistics 2012*. Ministry of Defence.

The data for 2009/10, which are more typical of the long-run outflow figures, is broken out in the chart below. Around half of these ex-Service personnel have completed four years of service or more, and are entitled to resettlement support through the Career Transition Partnership (CTP), while the other half have completed less than four years of service and are given more limited resettlement

⁴⁰ JSP 534: *The Tri-Service Resettlement Manual*. Issue 7, March 2010. Available at www.ctp.org.uk/assets/x/51979



support. The majority of those with at least four years' service have been in the Armed Forces for six years or more, and are entitled to the full CTP resettlement programme. This proportion accounts for around 40% of total leavers. It is also worth noting that 34% of the whole (and around two-thirds of Early Service Leavers) are discharged because they fail to complete their basic training.

Figure 3.2: Armed Forces Outflow by length of service



Source: UK Defence Statistics 2010, additional MOD data. Percentages do not total to 100 because of rounding.

Analysing this same set of data by Officers and Other Ranks, we see that Other Ranks are significantly more likely to fail to complete their basic training.

Definition of Early Service Leaver (ESL)

Early Service Leavers comprise of two distinct groups: those that are compulsorily discharged from the trained or untrained strength and lose entitlements because of the nature of their discharge; and those who opt to take their own discharge having served less than four years. Thus, anyone who has served for a day or more could qualify as an ESL.⁴¹

⁴¹ Fossey, Matt (2013). *Transition Support for British Army Early Service Leavers, An evaluation of the Future Horizons Programme, Infantry Training Centre, Catterick*. Available at http://www.academia.edu/3110282/Transition_Support_for_British_Army_Early_Service_Leavers_An_evaluation_of_the_Future_Horizons_Programme_Infantry_Training_Centre_Catterick



Figure 3.3: Service outflow by rank and training

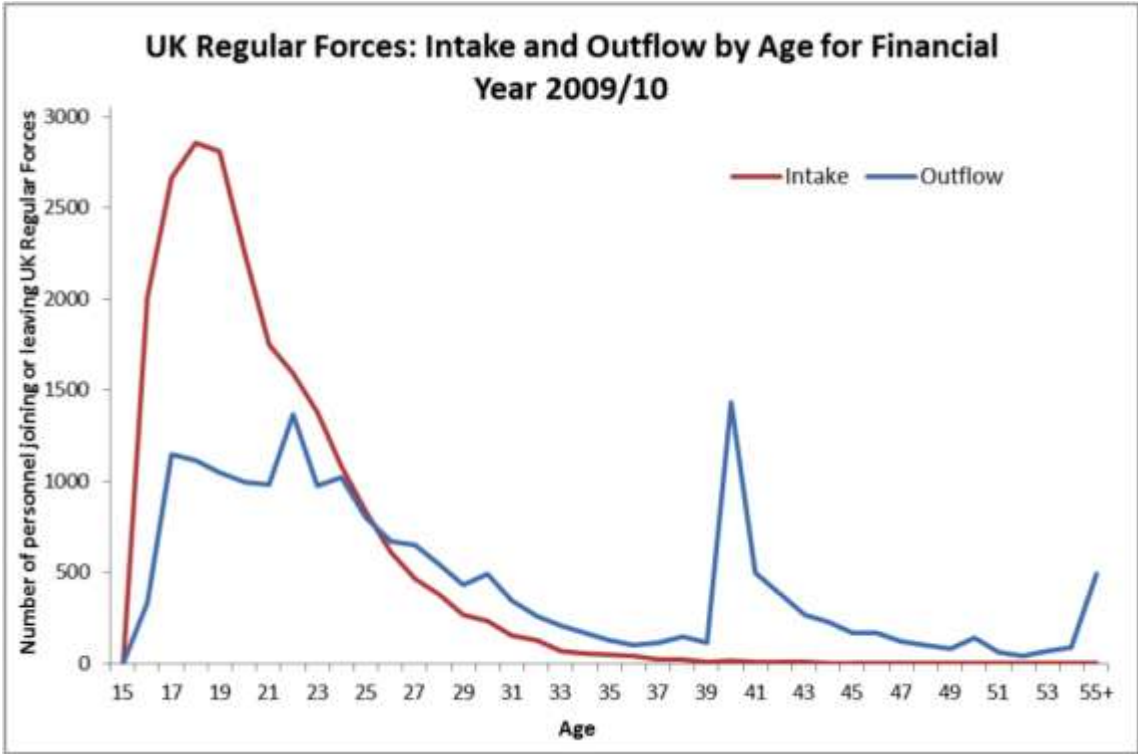


Source: DASA, UK Defence Statistics 2010. Ministry of Defence

Finally, the age of departure from the Services is relevant to outcomes, as discussed in the previous chapter, and this is seen in the diagram below. In summary, there is a set of early peaks in the early 20s when people who have joined from school leave after one term of service, and a second peak when people leave having completed the full pensionable period: 22 years of service, typically aged around 40. The red line shows the age of intake, the blue line the age of outflow.



Figure 3.4: Age of leaving Services



Source: DASA, UK Defence Statistics, 2010. Ministry of Defence.

The resettlement process is summarised by the CTP in the following way:

- Step One and Step Two cover all departing personnel.
- Step One (First Line) is a delivered by Resettlement Information Staff who provide initial information. This part of the process is normally done within Units, typically by a Resettlement Officer (Navy and Army) or a Resettlement and Education Co-ordinator (RAF).
- Step Two (Second Line) is a one-to-one interview with a Service Resettlement Advisor (SRA) who provides an advice and guidance package.
- Step Three (Third Line) is the CTP support, which is dependent on length of service.

These three steps are shown in the diagram below, originally published by the CTP:



Figure 3.5: The Services Resettlement Process



Source: Career Transition Partnership⁴²

Transition issues

There are many factors influencing the resettlement period, which affect the ability of Service personnel to make the most of the resources and support available to them to help make a successful transition. These can be summarised under the following headings:

Delivery of resettlement information: despite improvements, the quality of the delivery of the initial resettlement briefing varies widely. Commanding officers are sometimes unsympathetic, especially to early release personnel. The issue is most acute for ESLs, for whom the briefing is a substantial part of the support provided. A significant amount of information is given quickly, in language that may not be appropriate to the educational attainment levels of all recipients.

Attitudes of leavers towards transition: leavers can delay their engagement in the transition process, either because they are unable to engage (for example, they are deployed) or because they are unwilling to engage (they are not psychologically ready for transition). The lack of psychological preparation is more acute for those for whom transition is unexpected (for example, for reasons of medical discharge).

Deciding what to do next: Job vs career: the resettlement process, particularly for those with CTP entitlement, is designed to place people into work. There are good reasons for this, since income reduces other pressures (such as family pressures). However, the process is better at placing leavers into similar work than helping them transition to a new career that might prove more stable and satisfying in the longer term.

The last posting: leavers whose final posting is in the location in which they plan to resettle are likely to have a smoother transition than those whose last posting is not where they plan to resettle. Such postings help both with finding work and with the adjustment to civilian (family) life.

⁴² Career Transition Partnership, (2013), *Starting your Resettlement*. Available at <https://www.ctp.org.uk/getting-started-with-resettlement>



Needs vs. reward/entitlement: the current design of transition entitlement emphasises the reward element of length of service at the expense of needs-based support. However, a significant proportion of ESLs—one-sixth in 2009/10—have completed training and may have been deployed. ESLs are also more likely to have mental health problems (the research is so far agnostic on causality). Another way of viewing this is that ESLs have substantially worse employment outcomes (52% in work after six months⁴³) than those with CTP entitlement (85% after six months), and therefore represent a significant public cost of poor transition.⁴⁴

In the following section we will review each of these in turn.

1. Delivery of resettlement information

There is often a lack of clarity on the part of the ex-Service person of what exactly they were entitled to in terms of resettlement support and allowances. This means Service personnel may unknowingly miss out on parts of the resettlement process that they were entitled to. One of the barriers to clear communication of entitlements seems to be the modes of delivery of information. For those entitled only to the basic resettlement, the information is delivered in an extensive and detailed PowerPoint briefing by someone of the rank of Senior NCO or their civilian equivalent. Many report that their experience of this briefing is that there is too much information provided to absorb in one go. Additional materials are often given, in printed or electronic format, to personnel whose roles may not have required high levels of literacy or independent working.

A recently published report evaluating the success of the Future Horizons Programme highlighted some of the challenges presented by the current discharge pathway particularly for ESLs. The current pathway is often shorter than two weeks and involves a briefing delivered using a standardised set of slides to cover a range of important information including welfare organisations, financial matters, employment and housing. As the report observes, ESLs are given a booklet outlining what has been presented. However, “Briefing Officers would often collect these from the bin after the presentation to give to the next lot of ESLs.” In most cases ESLs only have the opportunity of this briefing to assimilate complex information about the potential outside resources available to them.⁴⁵ This supports the qualitative finding of this report that the mode of delivery of information in some cases makes it difficult to absorb or engage with, particularly for those who only get First Line CTP support.

Recent Service leavers also indicated that there is a lack of consistency in terms of how the resettlement process is delivered in practice, while military stakeholders advised us that this had improved in recent years. In our research ex-Service personnel’s experience of their resettlement interview varied significantly. Quality and effectiveness of the interview is largely dictated by the person who leads the interview and their relationship with the Service leaver. They can be hugely influential on transition outcomes. Commanding officers reportedly can have varying levels of interest and engagement in helping the Service person; they may have had varying levels of training in the resettlement process; and may not be able to provide the person leaving the Services with the most relevant information and advice.

“My commander basically said that the grass wasn't greener on the other side, that I didn't know what I was going to do on Civvy Street, and I should sign back on. It was half an hour of pure hell. I'd already made my mind up. He wasn't offering me anything. He just wanted to say that he'd given me his duty

⁴³ Figure mentioned in two separate Stakeholder interviews.

⁴⁴ Career Transition Partnership (2012) *Informing your future: An update on Armed Forces resettlement*. Ministry Of Defence. Available at <https://www.ctp.org.uk/assets/x/52909>

⁴⁵ Matt Fossey (2013)



of care, that if I didn't know what I wanted to do when I left, that he'd asked me if leaving was the best thing for me. I was in Iraq, there was no way I could do anything towards leaving, I couldn't go into town, or look on a computer. It was pointless.” (Male, Voluntary Early Release, Army)

“My troop commander told me about it, he said it was a bit naff, but I could go on it if I wanted. I asked if there was any point, and he said it was up to me. He said, 'You basically come out of it with a little CV, and that's it.' I said, 'Would you go on it?' He said, 'No,' so I didn't go on it.” (Male, Voluntary Early Release, Army)

Some of the ex-Service personnel entitled to attend a Careers Transition Workshop (CTW) find it more helpful than others. Many welcome the workshop because it feels like a first step towards preparing for leaving. It teaches important basic skills such as CV writing, which is felt to be hugely valuable to help with finding employment. In research by the Audit Commission, departing Services personnel who were eligible for the full CTP resettlement package, in particular, valued the supported offered in writing CVs (86%) and interview techniques (79%).⁴⁶ However, some feel the workshop is too generic—that the same workshop tries to cater for too large a range of needs across ranks and fails to tailor to individual needs. The CTW is appreciated by departing Services personnel because it provides valuable learning, but for some it fails to address their individual needs.

While the training received during parts of the resettlement process, such as the CTW, is considered valuable, some ex-Service personnel find, in retrospect, that some of the information would have been more helpful had it been provided earlier than the resettlement briefing or the CTW. For example, details given at the housing briefing about what is necessary in the private housing market to be considered for a tenancy agreement or a mortgage is information that could be shared before resettlement to allow them to start making financial provisions. Ex-Service personnel also report that it can adversely affect your credit rating if your residential address has changed as many times as it does during a career in the Services. Experts emphasised the value in providing certain pieces of advice and information significantly earlier than in the current process, particularly financial advice:

“Everyone gets a resettlement package 3 months before they leave but it feels like they need to embed it earlier on—at 3 months [to go] it is too late—they need to start saving for rent or a house deposit and prepare things in advance.” (Stakeholder interview)

2. Attitudes of leavers towards transition

Entitlement to support and preparation time are not the only significant factors. The attitudes of personnel leaving the Services towards transition are central to outcomes. This has two components: mind-set and engagement.

Successful transition depends on a change of mind-set, and on that happening in time to prepare for life as a civilian. This understanding of the importance of mind-set and engagement with planning for transition points to an important distinction: that there is a difference between when the process of the resettlement formally starts, and when the psychological engagement with resettlement and starting to think about and actively plan for transition starts. For example, some personnel have an 'exit plan' from the moment they join; they enter with a plan for what they will do afterwards. For others a personal life event during their time in service triggers them to start (re)considering their future plans. These groups are more likely to start psychological engagement with resettlement earlier on, which puts them in a better position to make the most of any support and entitlements that they

⁴⁶ National Audit Office (2007)



can access. For others, the start of the resettlement period and contact from CTP prompts a more proactive approach to planning.

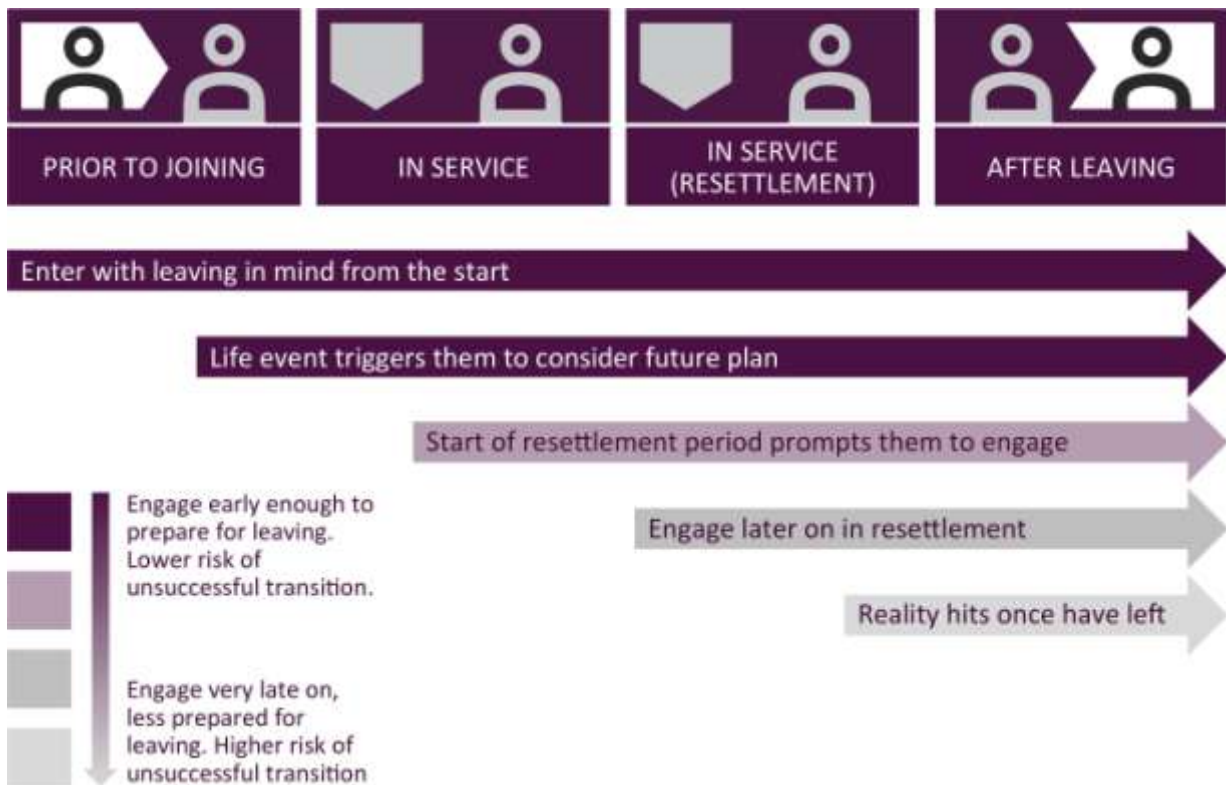
However, there are also a number of personnel who engage too late in resettlement, or even after they have left the Services.

“They were always trying to offer me things, but by that point, I didn’t want anything from them... I was throwing my toys out of the pram.” (Male, medically discharged, Army)

The reasons why medically discharged personnel may have particular problems in engaging are explored in the Box on ‘unexpected vs expected transitions’ below. The conventional wisdom from stakeholders is that it is a function of the unpredictability of the discharge process, and this is partly correct. However, it goes deeper.

It is important to acknowledge and account for this latter group of personnel who do not engage or are not receptive to help during the resettlement period. They can run into difficulties when they leave, and providing support for a longer timeframe after leaving may help with those who have a delay in coming to terms with the reality of leaving the Services. In our research, ex-Service personnel and families of ex-Service personnel spoke of the need for some kind of ‘reality check’ to prompt action to start planning for leaving. Some suggested that having the opportunity to speak to someone who has been through it before, who was able to tell them about some of the realities of the changes to expect, would have been a good prompt to start preparing.

Figure 3.6: Schematic of individual readiness for transition



Source: The Futures Company

Levels of engagement in the resettlement process vary significantly between personnel. An important factor in determining levels of engagement is the reason for leaving. Depending on whether the



reason for leaving was planned (e.g., retirement) or unplanned (e.g., injury or redundancy), the Service person can have quite different feelings about their time in the Services coming to a close. This can affect the levels of time, energy and commitment they invest in planning for civilian life prior to leaving.

For those for whom leaving was neither planned nor chosen, engaging in the resettlement process often does not take place until it is too late to prepare for transition. For example, in the cases where personnel are medically discharged it can often be uncertain as to whether they will be classed as unfit or not. Some will have the hope that they will be allowed to stay on, or believe that if discharged they will be able to get fit enough to return. Preparation tends to start only once the medical board has signed them off. They can struggle both mentally and practically when they leave, as they have little time once signed off to prepare for transition.

Even amongst those with full entitlement, some leave it too late before they engage in the resettlement process, resulting in less opportunity to use their entitlement. Even those with a two year resettlement period don't always engage until later. It can be hard to accept mentally that they are going to leave, and this happens only as their end date comes closer. Two years can seem like a long time to prepare, leaving some to postpone it; in practice the delay can result in their missing out elements of their package, such as attending a training course.

“Two years is a long time. Leaving is still out of your mind—you are not thinking yet about leaving and even though your contract is set to end at that point you may get asked to sign on for longer so it's not certain.” (Male, End of Engagement, RAF)

“You've just decided to leave and your head's all over the place and you're wondering if you've done the right thing and they want you to tell them what you want to do when you leave.” (Male, 44, Voluntary Early Release, Navy)

Once an individual has started their mental engagement with resettlement, attitudes and approaches also vary notably; from the most pro-active who take an independent approach to their resettlement to the most passive that take limited action and have an attitude of dependence. Part of the individual's attitude to resettlement is determined by their character (whether a natural planner/organised or more relaxed), as well as how motivated they are about leaving and levels of optimism regarding what their prospects might be 'outside the wire'. As noted in the previous chapter, stakeholders argued that life in the Services can reduce a sense of independence, particularly for those who live principally on military bases, which is at odds with the expectations needed to progress in the world of civilian employment. (Other military values, such as being a team player, in contrast, are an asset).

Passive: “I wanted to do the full 22 years. In terms of what I thought about doing after, I was going to cross that bridge when I came to it. I always thought ‘I may be broke, but at least I'll have had 22 crazy years.” (Male, 23, Medically Discharged, Army)

Active: “I did everything that was on offer—I went on courses, attended job fairs and learnt tricks off others as to work the system and get the most out of it.” (Male, 43, End of Engagement, Army)



Expected vs unexpected transitions

Research with elite sportspeople facing transition from their sporting careers has found a striking difference in psychological approach between those whose careers were coming to an end because of the normal processes of aging, and those whose careers had been curtailed by unpredictable events such as injury or de-selection. Sports researchers call the first a “normative transition” and the second a “non-normative transition.” The literature on athletes experiencing involuntary retirement (non-normative) reports a range of adverse psychological symptoms, including depression, eating disorders, decreased self-confidence, feelings of anxiety or anger and lower self-control. Research suggests that these responses can be explained through the notion of “symbolic loss.”

While there are evident differences between elite athletes and military personnel, some factors in such “symbolic loss” are common to both groups. These include their sense of identity, physical or technical proficiency, and camaraderie with team-mates. The qualitative research for the Forces In Mind Trust found that the psychological aspects of “non-normative” transitions such as those experienced by wounded, injured and sick can be at least as traumatic as the physical aspects. Similarly, those discharged after a breach of Service regulations are likely to have a tougher psychological transition.⁴⁷

3. Deciding what to do next: Job or career

Ex-Service personnel with four or more years of service who are entitled to part or all of the CTP resettlement package can expect to find themselves in work within six months of leaving. 85% of such ex-Service personnel who are seeking employment are employed within six months; this figure rises within 12 months. This figure underlines that the supported transition system is geared towards getting ex-Service men and women into work. There is a clear rationale for this, especially in the early stages of civilian life. Regular income eases other issues that could derail successful transition and, in turn, reduces the level of anxiety within the family that is associated with it. However, it appears that there is less focus on whether the departing Service person is also able to create a platform for a sustainable and satisfying second career.

As a result, leavers may accept a job that is insufficiently challenging (and this may be reinforced by lack of knowledge or information about the expectations of civilian employers), or which seems to lack opportunities to progress. This can result in several job moves early in their civilian transition, periods of temporary work and periods of unemployment. There is some qualitative evidence of this, including a report published by the Forces Select Foundation which distils some of their research findings into a fictionalised case study, ‘Chris’: “Like many Service Leavers engaged in our research Chris was under the impression that certain roles would provide a wage to support a comparable lifestyle to that he had experienced in the Army. As with many Service Leavers we interviewed, this view was unrealistic in practice.”⁴⁸

Those who choose a job as part of a career path are more likely to be motivated and feel they are progressing. Poor employment choices at the start can result in poor transition outcome later on.

⁴⁷ Brownrigg, A., Burr, V., Locke, A., and Bridger, A. J., (2012), “You don’t know what’s around the corner: A qualitative study of professional footballers in England facing career transition.” *Qualitative Methods in Psychology Bulletin* (14). Available at <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/14384/>

⁴⁸ Forces Select Foundation and ESG, The Employment and skills group, (2011). *Joining Forces: A holistic approach to the resettlement of ex-Service personnel*. Available at [http://www.esggroup.co.uk/Site-assets/Documents/Force-esg-report-\(1\).aspx/](http://www.esggroup.co.uk/Site-assets/Documents/Force-esg-report-(1).aspx/)



There is a need for a greater recognition of the importance of employment that is satisfying, appropriate and sustainable in successful transition.

Resettlement can feel easier for those who seek a job similar to the one they have in the Armed Forces. There tend to be two paths: to follow the same type of job they have in the Services outside of the Armed Forces or to change direction completely and seek a new career. The top three things that Officers and their families were most concerned with when leaving the Services were: finding a job (84%), financial security (81%) and job security (73%).⁴⁹ Our qualitative research suggested strongly that the employment advice and information available to leavers is set up better for those who plan to transfer existing skills to the civilian employment world. There is information on courses and access to networks of employers for these departing Service personnel. However, there seems to be a lack of information and advice for those who wish to change career and seek guidance, even inspiration, about other options.

One barrier to seeking employment using existing skills gained in the Services is the lack of transferability of qualifications and licences to the civilian employment market. While there is some alignment in some trades and sectors, many qualifications are still not recognised outside the Services. Qualitative research showed that this sometimes requires ex-Service personnel to pay to 'retake' previously gained qualifications to make them valid in the civilian world, often at significant personal expense.

It can be difficult to know what to do after leaving. There also needs to be more informed management of expectations of what is involved in training for a new career. Changing career path can be difficult and it feels like more support than is currently available is needed for future departing personnel.

"The whole CTP job finding process is quite targeted on doing what you've done in the forces. So, for instance, they give you a lot of companies who are recruiting for offshore jobs where you go away for months at a time and come back for a bit of time off. You've been doing that for years on end. If you want a change, if you want to be at home, why would you want to go offshore? Also there are a lot of companies that go to them and will say, 'We want this ex-Navy engineer for this job in a dockyard on a ship.' Why would you want to do that if you've been on a ship for fifteen years and want to get away from it? For me, finding something different was quite important. I didn't want to be doing all that again, but it does seem like they do push for the ex-Forces thing for MOD contract jobs and stuff because you've been doing that. It's easier for them and they might think it's easier for you." (Male, Medical Discharge, Navy)

Whether ex-Service personnel are intending to continue to work using skills gained in service, or to start a new career or profession, there is often a limited understanding of what they can expect in the civilian marketplace. A tough employment market, coupled with difficulty translating their title, role, and skills into the civilian workplace, can create an expectations gap. Many personnel leave with the assumption that they will be able to earn at least the same as that which they were earning in the Services.

There is scope for some expectation management around what personnel can expect in terms of how many applications/interviews they may need to make to secure a job, what level of seniority they can

⁴⁹ The Officers' Association (2011), *What services do officers and their families want? Survey to support The Officers' Association 2011 Strategic Review?* Available at [http://www.officersassociation.org.uk/The Officers Association survey - August 2011 final.pdf](http://www.officersassociation.org.uk/The%20Officers%20Association%20survey%20-%20August%202011%20final.pdf)



expect to working at, and a realistic idea of likely salary range. The culture of the civilian workplace is also very different (this is discussed further in Chapter 4). One stakeholder suggested that giving Service personnel far more exposure to civilian working environments, prior to leaving, could help reduce some of the cultural adjustments that are required upon leaving:

“Employment training is concentrated in two days in a military environment. They should have exposure to civilian employers over a six month period instead, to provide them with civilian work experience and help them adjust.” (Stakeholder interview)

“I’m not going to go into a new job knowing it inside out like I currently know my job. I will go in at the bottom of the ladder. There may be people half my age knowing more than me. It’s a concern that I’m going to have to start again and work my way up again especially having been in such an authoritative position in the RAF.” (Male, End of engagement, RAF)

4. The last posting

Practical factors can impair an individual’s ability to make the most of the resettlement package on offer to them. The circumstances of the final posting make a significant difference to the individual’s opportunity to prepare for resettlement. It can be much harder for ex-Service personnel to prepare to leave if they are posted away on operational tour in the year or two prior to leaving. When on operational tour, resettlement takes a back seat. There is a lack of opportunity to prepare—both mentally (serving is front of mind) and practically (unable to research online, attend CTW or courses). It can prevent the person who is leaving from exercising their entitlements.

As one stakeholder observed: *“It is particularly hard for those who are away on tour a lot, and haven’t had time to train or think about transition. As operational tempo dies down they may have more time to think about it.”*

Those who have a more settled final posting (do not go on operational tour) have a greater chance to prepare for transition. Importantly, this preparation extends beyond transition into civilian employment. It also smooths the adjustment into civilian family life and gives greater opportunity to sort out the many other issues involved in transition.

“Brian was posted in Glasgow for the last four years of his time in service, and I feel like Brian’s transition started when he moved back to Glasgow - it helped us be able to settle more, with the kids and that... Just having him home every night, made it better to adjust... It was a lot easier because he was in a home posting for where we were going to settle.” (Female, wife of ex-Service person,)

5. Needs vs. reward/entitlement (and ESLs)

The underlying principle of the Armed Forces Covenant is that no individual should be disadvantaged because of their Services career. At the same time, the rationale for the current model of transition support is not clear. Outsiders perceive it as being a reward for service; others suggest that the current model is based on an assumption that longer-service personnel are likely to find it harder to adapt to the civilian world. (This latter view is not supported by the evidence.)

There is a rationale for encouraging longer service. Recruitment is expensive and it is far more expensive to recruit new personnel than to encourage existing personnel to remain in the Services. As the Future Horizons report notes:



“It is customary in the armed services, and makes good economic sense, to encourage long service and good behaviour through a system of rewards. Since the degree of support offered to reintegrate back into civilian society is proportionate to length of service, those who have only served for a short period of time are given the least support, yet many of these may need the most help.”⁵⁰

The outflow data suggest, at the least, that a significant proportion of ESLs who have completed training and are likely to have been deployed get only minimal support in resettlement (17% of all leavers in 2009-10 were ESLs who had completed training). On this basis, the four-year cut-off for tailored transition support appears arbitrary when placed against the aspiration of the Armed Forces Covenant that those who have served should not be disadvantaged. More broadly, those who are most at risk of a poor transition are those who tend to have joined the Armed Forces younger with lower literacy and numeracy levels, and have then opted for early release.

“We started with the hypothesis that the longer you served, the more institutionalised you may have become and the more difficult you’d find it to reintegrate into society. But what studies have found is actually the reverse—that those that had served the longest had fewer problems than those who have served for a shorter period of time.” (Stakeholder interview)

Depending on their deployment pattern, ESLs may have been on several tours of duty in that time and as a result have had less time available for training or education. Only 52% of ESLs from the Armed Forces are in work within six months of leaving, compared to 85% of those who receive CTP support. The view that those most in need of transition support do not receive it under the present model is widely held by stakeholders and is a recurring theme in the literature.

“The vulnerable have low education levels and no plans for transition—they need more training and education intervention in service, and more follow-up afterwards.” (Stakeholder interview)

Stakeholders have suggested that a more ‘needs assessed’ distribution of resettlement support may have more impact on reducing poor transition outcomes, versus the current system of distributing transition resources broadly on the basis of years of service.

The issue of ‘needs-based’ provision of transition support is becoming increasingly recognised, particularly with regard to ESLs. The Future Horizons Programme is one of two trials commissioned by the MOD to develop and test ways of offering support to ESLs. It provides support for trained soldiers (who are also categorised as ESLs), leaving from any unit within Catterick Garrison. As the Future Horizons report details: “The main aim of the programme is to assist and support ESLs with the transition from the Army back into civilian life and importantly to help ESLs find and remain in appropriate employment once they leave. Practical support is also available if ESLs have more immediate needs around accommodation, health concerns or other issues that they feel they need help with.”⁵¹ The programme tracked 84% of the ESLs who joined the programme, and figures demonstrate the success of its approach in three key ways:

- **Engagement:** the programme has managed to engage 99% of eligible ESLs seen in the briefing. (This can be compared to a pre-FHP proxy measure of ESLs signing up the Service of Care (SoC) option, provided by the RFEA, of 53%.)

⁵⁰ Matt Fossey, (2010)

⁵¹ Fossey, Matt (2013)



- **Employment success:** after six months 63.4% of the ESLs were in employment or training. According to the report evaluating the programme, this figure compares very favourably to other government funded employment schemes.
- **Recommendation:** at the six month review point, over 90% of the ESLs using the programme said that they would recommend it to others.

One of the distinctive characteristics about the Future Horizons Programme is that it involves a meeting with an FHP advisor who makes an assessment of the level of support (Levels 1, 2 or 3) that the ESL should receive once they have transitioned out of ITC Catterick.⁵² Qualitative research suggests that this form of needs-based assessment could be recommended for all Service personnel going through resettlement as part of creating a more tailored and personalised transition pathway.

Discharges from Military Correction Facilities

A study by van Staden, et al. (2007) highlights another important sub-group of Service leavers who are particularly vulnerable to poor transition outcomes: those leaving the Armed Forces via the Military Corrective Training Centre (MCTC). The study tracked 74 of these individuals for six months and found three key factors affecting being disadvantaged at follow-up: having pre-discharge mental health problems, receiving an administrative discharge, or having a short sentence length. This finding supports other qualitative research that suggested shorter timeframes to prepare for transition are likely to result in poorer transition outcomes. 60% of those in the survey had been sentenced to time in the MCTC because they had been 'absent without leave'. On sentence length and reason for discharge, the report concludes: 'In general, administrative discharges had shorter sentence lengths and therefore had less opportunity to make use of these available services; and because they had to return to their unit, were unable to make immediate appointments for housing and benefits due to uncertain release.'⁵³ This indicates a need to improve support offered to those who are administratively discharged.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Lauren van Staden (2007), Transition Back into Civilian Life: A Study of Personnel Leaving the U.K. Armed Forces via "Military Prison", *Military Medicin*, 172, 9:925.



Summary of risk factors at resettlement stage

MORE AT RISK	LESS AT RISK
Little time to prepare	More time to prepare (two year resettlement period)
Minimum transition support	Eligible for full CTP transition support
Engage psychologically with transition close to or after discharge date	Engage with transition early
Passive engagement with resettlement	Active engagement with resettlement
Low awareness of process	Aware of process and entitlements
Low educational base, military-specific skills, little support	Strong transferable skills, education base, network of support
Poorly equipped for transition, likely to need support after discharge	Better equipped for transition, in less need of support

Recommendations

Recommendation 3.1 Needs assessment. As part of the resettlement process there should be a thorough needs assessment which takes into account both what the Service person is *entitled to* and what they will *need* in order to make a successful transition. This should be different to the current vulnerability assessment and should take into account factors such as civilian employability, savings and financial stability, housing and emotional support. This may mean that it will be necessary to arrange for some types of support which the Service person is not entitled to, particularly in the case of ESLs.

Recommendation 3.2 Tailored pathway (needs based). The needs assessment should inform a tailored pathway which should be put together for every Service person during resettlement. There is a need for a more structured and tailored action plan for transition into civilian employment. To optimise the usefulness of such an action plan, the sooner it can be put together and more closely it can be monitored in terms of 'steps achieved', the better the likely impact. The current CTP workshop is considered by many to be too generic as it attempts to cater for too large a range of needs (across ranks and functions) and fails to tailor to individual needs. Many Services personnel would benefit from one-to-one consultation, similar to a careers advice consultation, in which a skills assessment would be made to suggest some viable next steps (in terms of either a new career, or building on in service skills). This would inform tailored advice about how best to spend training allowances and which courses would be most relevant.



Recommendation 3.3 Expectation management. Many Service personnel lack realistic expectations about the civilian employment market. Integrating greater understanding of the civilian employment market into the resettlement process will be important to better manage disappointment and demotivation upon leaving. This would lead to increased awareness and understanding of civilian work environments and culture, as well as improved understanding and expectations of likely levels of seniority and salary in a civilian employment role if moving sideways or starting in a new career, trade or industry.

Recommendation 3.4 Work experience. Ex-Service personnel who have very limited or no experience of civilian employment, are also unlikely to have done a formal interview or application process for some time, if at all. There is a need for some experience of civilian employment environment, roles and recruitment processes. This would offer a ‘taster’ of potential career, trade or industry options, and a chance to find a good fit in terms of skills and culture *before* the main priority becomes bringing in an income and possibilities to experiment are more limited.

Recommendation 3.5 Aligning qualifications. Some ex-Service personnel find that despite having many service related qualifications, these are often invalid in the civilian employment market or are not recognised outside the Services. Part of the process of resettlement should allow Service personnel to ‘translate’ their qualifications into civilian qualifications to make them valid for civilian employment. This would enable Service personnel to find employment using similar skills to those gained in service without having to personally invest in ‘retraining’ to gain expensive certificates for skills they already possess. It may be that this could be offered through a low interest/zero interest loan scheme, to allow people to invest in making their qualifications transferable at a time when cash-flow is likely to be low upon leaving.

Recommendation 3.6 Home deployments. A Service person’s final posting can make a significant difference to their ability to prepare and take up entitlements. If they are posted away on operational tour in the year or two prior to leaving, they have a reduced ability to prepared mentally and focus on impending life-change, and are also practically unable to access courses and workshops. Guaranteeing a final posting at a home base would lead to significantly smoother transitions. If this role can be in a more ‘civilianised’ environment (e.g., office-based), ex-Service personnel report experiencing a lower feeling of ‘culture shock’ when entering the civilian employment market, as part of their ‘transition’ starts before they leave the Services when they start a more ‘civilianised’ job. Ideally this should be at a location close to where the Service person intends to live after leaving.

Recommendation 3.7 Increasing levels of independence. One of the big shifts required for successful transition is a shift in mind-set from more dependent/collective to more independent. There is an opportunity to start to change the mind-set whilst still serving, This could be done with some practical measures such as increasing accountability of personnel for their own outgoings from their salaries as they move towards discharge to increase the degree of self-management.

Recommendation 3.8 More resource into ESLs. Data suggest that the group most vulnerable to a poor transition is the ESLs, who are also the group not entitled to CTP support. Investing in or redistributing some resource to provide greater support to ESLs is likely to result in a lower number of poor transitions. This group are most likely to be in need of further training or basic qualifications to enter the civilian employment market. (The figures for ESL are currently not reflected in the 85% figure cited for successful transitions which only accounts for those in receipt of CTP support.)



Recommendation 3.9: Formal involvement of families in the resettlement process. Families—spouses, partners, parents and siblings—are central to the transition guidance, as sources of support and information, sometimes as the first port of call in a storm. Engaging the families as well as the individuals who are transitioning is an essential building block in improving transition.

Recommendation 3.10: Increasing the consistency of resettlement delivery information. We understand that procedures have been improved, and that there is greater consistency now than in the past. However, there still appear to be differences between services and our research suggests that the quality of the initial resettlement briefing is very dependent on the individual officer or NCO giving it. Improving consistency, and increasing the period over which information is given, is likely to improve engagement of Service leavers.



Chapter 4: Transition



Introduction

The focus of Chapter 3 was largely on employment outcomes, because this is also the principal focus of the transition programme funded by the Ministry Of Defence and delivered at present by the Career Transition Partnership (CTP).

In this chapter, we look more at what we might call the “transition envelope,” meaning the combination of factors that surround the world of work, and together make the difference between a successful transition and a less successful transition. This envelope contains both soft factors, such as the sense of identity and the cultural adjustment to the different expectations of the civilian workplace, and harder factors, such as the availability of housing, the cost of bills, sources of financial and other support; and factors that bridge these, such as the quality of relationships.

Figure 4.1: the psychological challenge of transition



Source: The Futures Company

From our research, these transition issues group into a number of themes, which are summarised below.

The financial challenge: some of the financial aspects of transition, such as the need to pay deposits for accommodation or utilities have been referenced in previous chapters. But it is worth emphasising that this can be daunting. Housing, in particular, can be more expensive than expected, as can many other associated bills. Some costs, such as a visit to the dentist, can be unexpected; and many of those



transitioning find themselves earning less than they had done in the Armed Forces, which exacerbates the issue.

The cultural challenge: civilian workplaces tend to be more collegial (or give that impression) and less directive than the military world. They are also more feminised than the military. The boundary lines between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour are drawn in different places. Even those who have had good transitions report that adapting to these different expectations is a challenge. For some it creates a degree of instability around work that makes it hard to settle.

The role of the family: the majority of Service leavers report family or relationship tensions during transition. Some families who have lived the military life are transitioning too, but get little support themselves. For others, who are already working in the civilian world, they get little guidance on what to expect. But families are typically the first place an ex-Service person turns to for support and advice.

Sources of support: resources are available to help ex-Service personnel who have problems with transition, even if they are ineligible for the employment help afforded through the CTP. But these resources are scattered over dozens of specialist ex-Services charities, many of them small and difficult to navigate. In addition, the Services' culture creates an ethos in which it is perhaps harder to ask for help. More informal guidance would be useful.

Identity and emotional welfare: at the heart of a successful transition is a transition of identity; an emotional shift from being part of the Armed Forces to having a future as an individual in the civilian world. When transitions go wrong, it is typically because the individual does not have the psychological and emotional resources to overcome the inevitable setbacks. An objective of transition should be to create greater resilience to adverse events.

As in previous chapters, we will outline each of these themes in turn.

1. The financial challenge

The learning curve for ex-Service personnel can be very steep; for many the civilian world is quite foreign, and even the details of everyday life can be an unfamiliar struggle, from registering with a GP or a utility supplier to paying for prescriptions or having to wait for an appointment. The cost of living seems steep. Financial management does not come naturally to everyone. The structured systems that are in place to ensure personnel do not have to worry about rent, repairs or healthcare whilst in the Services can be a detriment to the ability of ex-Service personnel to cope with the financial demands of the non-military world.

"I was really apprehensive as you won't have things given to you. £100 for the dentist was a shock and that you have to pay for prescriptions. You are aware but it's not real until it becomes real. Even food isn't free anymore and you have to pay for work clothes and budget." (Male, End of Engagement, Navy)

"When I came out of the Forces, I wanted to travel, go around the world. Reality kicks in, you've got to bring money in and provide. When I was in the Forces, you didn't have much responsibility, you'd get paid loads, be happy, get drunk on the weekend, it was easy. When you come out into civvy life, you realise it's not that easy. It was a massive shock. Straight away, I cut my wage from £25,000 to £14,000, and I felt I was working a lot harder for the money. You're back home, and you struggle. You have to pay for food, board, everything, you're used to being looked after. In the Forces, you got your



wage, food and accommodation had already come out, and unless you had a family, you had no responsibilities.” (Male, Voluntary Early Release, Army)

There should be more emphasis on these life-skills prior to leaving the Services, and prior to the CTP or resettlement briefing, to increase awareness of these financial and practical aspects of civilian life before being faced with the reality of having to deal with them in practice.

When financial management goes wrong, the results can be disastrous. A study by the National Audit Office in 2007 found that five per cent of those who had left the Services in the past two years had experienced a period of homelessness.⁵⁴ Of this group, 53% had been homeless for between one and six months, and 12% for over a year.

A qualitative study of homeless ex-Services personnel in London found that around a quarter of those surveyed had encountered difficulties while serving in the Armed Forces that continued to affect them after discharge; and around a sixth had found the adjustment to civilian life difficult. (The others reported vulnerabilities prior to joining the Services or difficulties with unrelated trauma subsequent to leaving.)⁵⁵

While acknowledging that some of the housing problems experienced by ex-Service personnel are a reflection of the wider problems associated with Britain’s housing policy, our research found that stakeholders believed that a better handover of departing Service personnel to other government departments—and in the case of housing, better liaison with local authorities—could help mitigate some of the issues they experience:

“There are common issues with local authorities having no warning from the military that they are coming back from war and need housing.” (Stakeholder interview)

In the qualitative research, we found instances of “informal homelessness”, with transitioning personnel staying with friends and family, and sleeping on sofas or floors. This indicates that there is likely a higher incidence of ex-Service personnel finding themselves with no housing options but moving in with family or friends, which disguise the scale of this issue. Information provided in the housing briefing can feel disengaging to Service personnel, as the language used (e.g., ‘homelessness’ and ‘social housing’) often seems irrelevant to them whilst they still have the security of employment during the resettlement period.

“[In the housing briefing] they mentioned quite a bit about homelessness and social housing, but then said that you’d have a pension and a lump sum, which took my mind off it. In reality, I couldn’t rent a property without a certain income per month ... so it was quite a shock to find that I couldn’t rent without a six-month deposit. If I’d known this situation was likely to happen, for me and my family, I would’ve been able to de-risk it.” (Male, End of engagement, RAF)

Qualitative research revealed low levels of awareness before leaving of what is needed to rent or buy in the private housing market. Ex-Service personnel often have insufficient savings and limited experience of managing their finances; and without permanent employment and patchy credit records (due to frequent changes of address), can find it difficult to get accepted for a rental contract or mortgage.

⁵⁴ National Audit Office (2007)

⁵⁵ Johnson, S., Jones, A., and Rugg, J. (2008), *The Experience of Homeless ex-Service Personnel in London*, Centre for Housing Policy, University of York. Available at <http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/media/33475/homelessexserviceinlondon.pdf>



Such gaps in understanding demonstrate how extreme the drop-off in support and information can be when moving from life in service to civilian life; thereby highlighting the importance of 'joined up' support and well-structured hand-overs of relationship between the Services and public or private bodies which ex-Service personnel will have to manage in their civilian lives.

2. The cultural challenges

The cultural issues involved in transition are, for some, the greatest challenge. It is, perhaps, hard for those who have not experienced Services life to understand the extent of the cultural gap between the Services and civilian life, and arguably this has increased in recent years. One stakeholder commented:

"Not everyone is confident in operating in a civilian environment in the outside world. Some people need more help." (Stakeholder interview)

One of the biggest cultural shifts reported by ex-Service personnel that affect their ability to transition is the new working environment. The most commonly reported change is the loss of bonding and camaraderie with colleagues:

"That's probably the thing I miss about the army, is the lads, because you bond a bit like a family. When you go abroad, you've got to know you've got each other's backs. So you miss the lads... Other things that go on that you just don't need to worry about." (Male, Voluntary Early Release, Army)

Civilian and Armed Forces workplace cultures (as previously discussed in Chapter 3) are very different. It can take some time to adjust to civilian codes of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. The more collegial approach of many civilian workplaces is a contrast to military life. Learning to take a different approach in speaking to colleagues and dealing with poor performers can be difficult. Often ex-Service personnel find themselves working in organisations which appear to work less efficiently than the Services and are frustrated by the attitudes of their colleagues' to work:

"[I was] thinking this is so wishy-washy, she's the boss she should be telling people what to do. I just wanted to get in there, sort things out, make things happen ... It's very different to life in the army where you sit there, you tell people what you want to do, agree on a course of action and you've got a real team ethos to make things happen." (Female, End of engagement, Army)

This can be aggravated by frustrations about the level at which they are able to enter the civilian workplace. Some degree of expectation management is necessary to help ex-Service personnel understand the cultural changes they are likely to experience in the civilian working environment and in civilian lifestyles more generally. It is likely that an informal advisor who has been through transition themselves would be best placed to deliver this sort of information, prior to leaving the Services, to encourage the start of the psychological process of transition.

3. Home ties

The home environment can play an essential part in supporting the departing Service person as they navigate this new civilian world. Nonetheless, spouses and families who have lived the military life while the Service member has been in the Armed Forces can also suffer their own sense of loss on leaving.



Our qualitative research identified two broad groups of ‘family’ who are affected in distinctive ways by transition:

- ‘Proxy transitioners’: These are family members who have also lived a military life, and are therefore also transitioning into the civilian world themselves. They are directly affected by transition. They are likely to have lived in Armed Forces’ accommodation, been posted with their partner, children and so on. People in this group are likely to be suffering similar disruptions as the ex-Service person. They will also need to find new employment, and if they have children, new schools. However, they are also more likely to be networked with strong support networks within the Armed Forces.
- ‘Civvy Street hosts’: These are family members to whom ex-Service personnel return when they leave the Armed Forces—literally, in some cases, to live with them again or socially in terms of returning to these family members as their social network and support. They are family members who are indirectly affected in transition and are aware of impact. These are the people who are likely to be the first to see signs of a difficult transition, and also best equipped to provide practical guidance in terms of civilian life-skills to their transitioning family member. Unlike the proxy transitioners, the Civvy Street hosts include parents and siblings, and sometimes other relatives. However, they are less likely to be aware of the support the ex-Service person can access. These family members need to think of this support as an asset.

PROXY TRANSITIONERS	CIVVY STREET HOSTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family members who are also transitioning as a result of the ex-Service person’s departure from the Armed Forces. • They are likely to be suffering similar disruptions as the ex-Service person. • However, they are also more likely to be networked with strong support networks on Armed Forces’ bases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family members who are indirectly affected in transition because they already have their own civilian life. • Likely to be the first to see signs of a difficult transition, and best equipped to provide practical guidance on civilian life-skills. • They are likely to be less aware of what support and entitlements the Service leaver could access.

Source: The Futures Company

In both cases, some of the impacts on family may mean that they end up having to seek state support themselves.

While ‘Proxy transitioners’ are more likely to need the same sort of support as the ex-Service person, they are also better connected to sources of information on how to access support and have a pre-existing network of military and ex-military connections. Nonetheless, the current transition process seems blind to these family connections, and the potential they can represent to support an ex-Serviceman or Servicewoman who is having difficulty in transitioning.

“There is no-one for the family to speak to. Family should be as involved as the people leaving—we are in it together.” (Relative of Service leaver)

“I want information of what support there is and information available. It’s difficult knowing what to do for the best.” (Relative of an ex-Service person)



There is an opportunity in particular to make better use of ‘Civvy Street hosts’, who are often in the best position to provide practical and emotional support to help ease the transition from the Armed Forces. At present these types of families feel under-equipped to do this. There have, however, been some initiatives that are designed to be more inclusive of family members.

“The marine base in Plymouth does family days, which are good as it talks about common things that might happen, and places to direct you to, and raises awareness.” (Relative of a ex-Serviceman)

An obvious opportunity, in terms of improving transition outcomes, is also to make more of the role of family as providers of support. Family members can act as non-judgmental, informal, accessible advisors. Qualitative research with families of ex-Service personnel highlighted the extent to which they are often the first port of call for many types of support and advice, emotional and practical. But that family members do not always feel equipped to provide the ‘front line’ support demanded of them.

“My brother completely relies on me for advice and help as to what he should do. He can trust me. I want to help him but I’m not an expert.” (Relative of an ex-Serviceman)

But this support needs to be part of a more rounded approach. If families are going to be a source of transition support, they also need to be more prepared for the stresses of transition. 58% of respondents to the *Joining Forces* survey reported that transition “put extra pressure on their family or personal relationships” (13% reported an improvement). ‘Civvy Street Hosts’, who may have valued the relative independence of a relationship with an Armed Forces partner, may need more guidance on what to expect from their partner’s transition:

“I was used to having my freedom and cooking for one, and now he is living with me and we have had some rows—it’s been a bit stressful. My salary doesn’t cover everything and I worry about him not working. I’m not a military wife, we don’t have kids and I’ve never moved around, so I’ve not spoken to anyone. I didn’t know what to expect.” (Wife of an ex-Navy Serviceman)

In some cases, unsuccessful transitions can impose a huge load on the family. In one case identified in the qualitative research, both siblings of a naval officer who had had a medical discharge had to make significant changes to their lives to support their brother:

“He won’t go on the dole. People in the job office won’t help. He was in a relationship but when he was told he couldn’t go back in he ended it through self-pity. He fully relies on us [his family]. I have changed my job to do night shifts so I can look after him in the day time. I play down my success so not to make him feel bad. When I go away my sister takes time off work to stay with him. It’s having a massive domino effect. We do everything for him and we are not able to talk to anyone. There is no family support.” (Relative of an ex-Serviceman, Medically Discharged from the Navy)

4. Support and sources of advice

The landscape is confusing. For those who leave the Services, and need help, but are not entitled to the tailored support of the Career Transition Partnership, there are resources available, but they are spread across a myriad of ex-Services charities whose particular role and purpose can be unclear even to those who work in the area.

There is no central conduit for information for ex-Service personnel trying to navigate the sector, and the charities themselves have been slow to make connections between themselves.



If there was one message that came from the stakeholder interviews and qualitative survey, it was this: the charities involved in the sector needed to collaborate more effectively and to make it easier for ex-Service personnel in search of help to find it.

“Leaving can be confusing for people. They don’t know where to go for help—it’s not clear. They need better signposting and refer people to the best support.” (Stakeholder interview)

“There is a confused landscape of knowledge. There’s no central conduit for information for Service leavers and failure of organisations to link.” (Stakeholder survey)

“The ground is over complicated. Everyone signposts. If they have a mental health problem you will signpost them to combat stress but you wonder if they make that call. They should have one helpline.” (Stakeholder interview)

“If I could change one thing about the sector? I’d introduce a single phone number for people trying to access help.” (Stakeholder interview)

Qualitative research found that ex-Service personnel are aware that there are a significant number of organisations for people leaving the Services. However, most are unable to name the organisations, and even fewer are able to identify the specific needs or audiences they are intended to serve. Information about the organisations is often delivered as part of a long list of charities and web links; and there is limited support to navigate the list or find the relevant organisations.

And as discussed in the previous chapter, those who have had the support of the CTP can be unclear that it is only a two year commitment. Yet there are a number of specialist charities working in the area of ex-Service employment, some of whom are also in the Partnership. A clearer handover at the end of the CTP’s support period would help.

There is a clear need for a central navigation tool, directory, search engine or central phone number to help identify the charities which provide support for the various groups and for specific needs.

Barriers to take up

Even with a simplified charities landscape, many ex-Service personnel are reluctant to make use of help that is available to them or to which they are entitled. There are different strands to this. Some leavers do not think of themselves as “veterans” and therefore do not wish to access support that is available to ex-members of the Armed Forces. For some, it is a question of self-image: they do not wish to be thought of in the same way as those who claim state benefits, even though they are entitled to them. This strong sense of pride (and a sense of the indignity of asking, in particular, for state support) can be a significant barrier to accessing help and entitlements. And sitting behind both of these there is a third attitudinal barrier:

“There is a stigma with seeking support and getting help—the challenge is to reach people who don’t want help, who may be some of the most vulnerable.” (Stakeholder interview)

“Many ex-Service people don’t want help and want to avoid government schemes. Also, they may see themselves as having left the Forces and want to disassociate themselves from anything to do with it.” (Stakeholder interview)



These issues of pride and stigma came through strongly in the qualitative interviews with ex-Service personnel.

“I’m proud; I’m trained to be strong ... Offered help is different to asking for help.” (Male, Medical Discharge, Navy)

Informal sources of support are an important route to help overcome these psychological barriers to seeking assistance, especially for those who find it difficult to admit they need support. From our interviews with ex-Service personnel, there are a number of reasons why informal advice can be preferred:

- It can seem more impartial—whereas more formal sources of support can seem to be process-driven or have an agenda (‘box-ticking’).
- It can seem more empathetic—when informal advice is sought from ex-Service personnel who have already been through transition; there can be great value in feeling that the person they’re talking to ‘knows where I’m coming from.’
- It can be more discreet—when informal advice is sought ex-Service personnel report that they feel more comfortable knowing they can trust that their enquiry or need for support will be handled discreetly, and without being reported back to anyone in their former Service.

The role of informal support

For these reasons, more informal sources of advice, which are able to provide discretion or anonymity, such as the RBL website, the CTP website, and the more unofficial ARmy Rumour SService forums are valued. Similarly, the qualitative research found a strong preference for resettlement information to be communicated and expectations managed one-to-one rather than through a formal group briefing. Those who are more engaged are curious to know about what the experience of transition is really like, and would like better ways to get the ‘real deal’ on what to expect and how they can best prepare. Departing Servicemen and Servicewomen often find it easier to respect and accept the advice of another Service person, rather than a civilian advisor. For some, a ‘buddy’ or mentor system could help provide valuable insight into civilian life and help better manage expectations of what lies ahead after leaving.

“The buddy scheme is a really good idea, but I don’t think everyone would take it—some people are too proud ... and they’re in a bad frame of mind when they leave.” (Male, Medical Discharge, Army).

5. Identity and emotional welfare

In one of the interviews quoted in Chapter 1, a stakeholder talked about transition being a multi-dimensional affair. Successful transition involves more than just employment and housing; it has an emotional aspect as well. One stakeholder commented to us:

“They might be able to find a job and get a house but feel socially isolated. The support mechanisms aren’t there when they leave.” (Stakeholder interview)

One of the important factors which demonstrates a successful transition is whether or not the ex-Service person feels they have been able to develop a new civilian identity. That is to say that their sense of identity and purpose isn’t rooted in the past, in their former in service status, but rather based on their present civilian circumstances and their plans for the future. Because military identity



and sense of purpose is such a powerful and all-encompassing feature of life in service, this can feel like one of the greatest losses for those who identified strongly with it.

“I don’t think I will ever be fully adjusted—it was life—I liked the regimental life and I still do things as I did in the Navy such as shower when I get up and always shave.” (Male, End of engagement, Navy)

This new sense of identity and purpose seems to be closely linked to finding a new civilian career path, which provides a reliable source of income with a potentially satisfying and sustainable career path. Whilst having employment as a source of income is key to financial stability, this does not necessarily follow that the ex-Service person is motivated or satisfied by the job they are able to get after leaving. Many suffer from feeling a lack of purpose and direction in their post-Service employment.

“I got a job but it wasn’t a challenge. I was becoming complacent with it. I was getting up in the morning and there was no, ‘Yes, I’m going to work.’” (Male, Voluntary Early Release, Army)

This suggests a need to re-evaluate the metrics which are measured to track successful transitions to include some softer factors such as levels of satisfaction with job role, prospects for professional development in new role, sense of purpose and direction. More holistic KPIs would allow the tracking to take a longer term, future-facing definition of successful transitions, and identify points where additional support is required to help ex-Service personnel work towards establishing a new civilian sense of identity.

Issues of identity are inevitably bound up with emotional health. While in general most ex-Service personnel show good mental health, those who suffer a poor transition are more likely to show signs of poor mental health. This is particularly true of ESLs according to research on a “large cross-sectional survey of a random sample of the UK Armed Forces” by Buckman et al..

“Personnel with mental health diagnoses during Service are more likely to leave than both personnel with no mental health diagnoses and personnel with physical health problems. Furthermore, personnel hospitalised during Service for mental health problems were more likely to be discharged due to medical reasons or for misconduct ... than personnel hospitalised for other health problems.”⁵⁶

The Buckman study identifies a specific implication for transition: “Highlighting that ESLs are more at risk of having poor mental health outcomes after leaving Service than non-ESLs may help target interventions to smooth their transition to civilian life, preventing some of the negative health outcomes experienced by ex-Service personnel.”⁵⁷ The researchers also acknowledge that too little is known about the relationship between Service careers and mental health outcomes.

Alcohol use and dependency, referenced in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, higher in Service personnel and ex-Service personnel than the population as a whole, can also affect transition outcomes.

The point here is that transition is a bumpy road even for those whose transitions are successful. Mapping work done by respondents in our qualitative research indicated that, for better or worse, events could have dramatic effects on their perception of how their transition was progressing. For

⁵⁶ Buckman, J. E. J., Forbes, H. J., Clayton, T., et al., (2013), “Early Service leavers: a study of the factors associated with premature separation from the UK Armed Forces and the mental health of those who leave early”. *European Journal of Public Health*, June, 23(3):410-5

⁵⁷ Ibid.



those whose transitions are less successful, a string of adverse events can make them unravel, removing their ability to cope with adverse experiences of the civilian world.

The overall purpose of transition support, therefore, should be to improve resilience, to make individuals more robust in the face of a significant life-change, especially in these areas of personal finance, social integration, emotional wellbeing and health. To reduce the proportion of poor transitions and the severity of the poorest, interventions need to deal with all of these areas.

“We tried to give him some independence and bought him a flat a couple of streets away from me but he’s not used to living alone. We are trying to give him a sense of pride back but he stays with me all the time. He just stays in playing the Playstation. We got him a gym membership as he used to do triathalons but he won’t go. I’ve looked at loads of websites but they think because he was a commander he will be fine.” (Relative of ex-Serviceman Medically Discharged from the Navy.)

Fighting fit

The mental health specialist Dr Andrew Murrison reported in 2010 on ways to improve the mental health outcomes of Services and ex-Services personnel. His short report, *Fighting Fit*, made recommendations to improve the mental health outcomes of currently serving personnel, transitioning personnel, and “existing veterans” respectively. His conclusions were founded on four propositions:

- “Established models of care should be used in designing the programme.
- Any provider that can deliver against National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines and Care Quality Commission (CQC) standards should be considered
- Follow-up and management should be as close to home as possible.
- Stigma deters Servicemen from engaging with conventional mental health provision.”

Focusing for present purposes on his review of those transitioning to civilian life, Murrison noted the Department of Health project with the Royal British Legion and Combat Stress, and the pilot programme then running to improve transfer of records to the NHS. In particular he recommended that Service personnel and Reservists are followed up for a mental health check-up about 12 months after they leave the Services, and that they are traced effectively rather than falling out of sight of the health services. Other recommendations included increasing the number of specialist mental health professionals and implementing plans at Trust levels to better manage referrals.



Summary of risk factors identified in research

MORE AT RISK	LESS AT RISK
Lack of provision: shortage of money; no accommodation; lack of emotional support; unemployed.	Substantial provision: healthy finances, some savings; accommodation; emotional support; employed quickly
Lack of knowledge of civilian life and workplaces	Knowledgeable about and comfortable with civilian life and workplaces
Find it hard to adapt to cultural norms of civilian life (greater shift to contend with)	Able to adapt more easily to the required cultural change
Mentally still living the Armed Forces' life—hasn't developed a new sense of self following discharge	Mentally has moved on from the Armed Forces' life—has created a new civilian sense of self since discharge
Bumpier transition ahead, large step-change, in greater need of support	Smoother transition, less change required, in less need of support



Recommendations

Recommendation 4.1 Engage the family. Families acting as support could benefit from better access to information about sources of support and entitlement, to help them fulfil more effectively their role as indirect advisors. This would help overcome the barrier of perceived stigma associated with seeking help, support or advice, by providing an indirect way of reaching Service leavers through family members, and would offer a clear point of contact for family members whose practical or financial circumstances are impacted by the return of an ex-Service person. There is also a clear case for providing more support to families who have lived the military life, and are in effect transitioning themselves.

Recommendation 4.2 Improved informal support. This would be a way of offering one-to-one advice on some of the ‘softer’ more emotional challenges of transition and coping mechanisms, with the opportunity to ask questions in a culturally familiar relationship (i.e., peer-to-peer, which is regarded as more equal and therefore has less stigma associated with it). We are aware that there have been pilot schemes to test such informal support, and that outcomes have been mixed. There is a clear expressed need; effective implementation may require better service design.

Recommendation 4.3 Better structured support for ESLs. ESLs get minimal resettlement support from the Armed Forces, but are less likely to find employment, and are more likely to report mental health issues after leaving. The evidence suggests in general that younger less skilled or less educated ex-Service personnel transition more poorly. The costs of such poor transitions fall on the budgets of other Government departments (such as DWP and Department of Health) in unanticipated ways, and sometimes become crises, which are more expensive to manage. From a public policy perspective, more structured support should reduce overall public costs of poor transition.

Recommendation 4.4 Access to work placements after resettlement. The courses offered during resettlement to retrain in a new profession are considered a valuable ‘starting point’ to, for example, starting in a new trade, but do not qualify ex-Service personnel to start practicing immediately or have the experience or network to ‘hit the ground running’. Connecting them with a professional already working in that field to offer them an internship or apprenticeship, or a period of contract work, would be one way to ease the transition from having had some initial training to becoming a practicing professional.

Recommendation 4.5 Review post-Services housing provision. Difficulties in finding appropriate and affordable accommodation emerged strongly as an issue during the qualitative research and in the research review. While it is not the task of the Armed Forces to address the overall housing challenges in the UK, there are specific issues that affect ex-Service personnel adversely, such as poorer access to social housing. This is a hugely complex issue: a specialist research study should review the systemic issues and identify interventions that could improve outcomes.

Recommendation 4.6 One single point of contact and support. There are hundreds of charities and organisations that offer help and advice to ex-Service personnel, but navigating them and finding the right one for a particular need can be a struggle. Even practitioners commented on the number of charities, their degree of specialisation and the level of difficulty in understanding which charity did what. There is a need for one single point of contact (e.g., one phone number or one website) through which ex-Service personnel can be referred to the right place for their specific circumstances and needs. This would significantly improve the prospects of ex-Service personnel being able to find the right resource when they need it.



Recommendation 4.7 Mapping the Services charity landscape. The complexity and the fragmentation of the Services charity landscape are evident. A valuable building block towards one single point of contact would be to map the charity landscape through an audit of available resources, which would make a handover more straightforward, and also identify whether there are—geographic or functional—gaps in provision. An indicative piece of work has been done as part of this project. We understand that FiMT plans a more substantial piece of research in this area.

Recommendation 4.8 Broader KPIs. Whilst a significant number of ex-Service personnel (predominantly amongst those entitled to CTP support) find employment after leaving, the current metrics for measuring success of transition are limited to whether or not the ex-Service person is in employment. There is a need for a measurement of success which accounts for some of the ‘softer’ characteristics of civilian employment, which inform long term success of the ex-Service person. More holistic factors such as levels of satisfaction with employment, ability to stay in the same role for an extended period of time and longer term prospects for professional development would be helpful measures to foresee longer term success during and after transition.

Recommendation 4.9 Improve research and monitoring. Data on ex-Service personnel’s circumstances after leaving is patchy and under-representative in particular of those not entitled to CTP support. There is a need for more comprehensive monitoring of ex-Service personnel after leaving to be able to develop a clearer picture of transition outcomes and factors that influence more or less successful transition. This data could also be used to inform profiling (Recommendation 2.1, Chapter 2) during recruitment.



Chapter 5: Modelling the costs of poor transition

Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, the modelling element of the project was conducted as a separate work stream. Its purpose was, for the first time, to attempt to quantify the outcomes of poor transitions in terms of their economic costs to the country as a whole. The purpose of this work was to enable better informed and better evidenced decisions to be made about investments or interventions that might improve the quality of transition. In particular, we hoped to identify those transition outcomes that were particularly poor, in terms of their social and economic outcomes. One of our initial hypotheses was that—like so many systems—there might be areas which fell under the ‘80/20 rule’, in that 20% (or less) of cases accounted for 80% (or more) of both impact and cost. By being able to quantify these impacts and costs, we would be able to identify operational and policy issues that required a greater focus by stakeholders.

Models are a simplification of the world, but they are necessary simplifications. Geoff Coyle reminds us that a model always has three components⁵⁸:

“1. It has a purpose, which is best expressed as a question, or a few questions, which it is designed to answer—the model is a tool for thought about those questions.

2. It is a simplification of reality, because reality is too difficult to think about.

“3. In any case, much of reality is irrelevant to the problem ... A model therefore makes assumptions about what needs to be included and what can be excluded.”

The structure of the model is explained in the next section. As with all models, the numbers—the cost estimates of poor transition—are approximations. Where data is poor or incomplete or where the research has identified divergent views of costs, it has been necessary, as with all models, to make assumptions based on reviews of available literature. The model itself has been transferred to the FiMT as part of the project output and as data gets better or the range of assumptions narrows, it will be possible to adjust these and so improve the model.

While, allowing for this caveat, it should also be stressed that much of the data that has informed the model is of high quality. In particular the Ministry Of Defence, through DASA, has detailed information on the numbers and types of leavers in any given year, and also some planning-based projected data and we have been able to include these datasets in the model.

A number of other observations should also be made at this stage:

- Wherever we have made assumptions, we have made them on the basis of the most conservative assumption that is in line with the data.
- We have measured only the direct costs,, to government or third sector, of individuals who are having a poor transition, and indirect revenues foregone. For instance, the costs of an unemployed Service leaver are calculated in terms of unemployment benefit received and tax

⁵⁸ Coyle, G., (2004) *Practical Strategy*. FT Prentice Hall, Harlow.



and national insurance foregone by the government. But they do not include the costs of the individual of their loss of income.

- Nor have we included direct costs borne by Service leavers or their families in dealing with poor transition outcomes. For example, the charity One Plus One notes that in just the first year of break-up costs to the family include loss of income, additional household costs (two homes, not one), as well as legal fees.⁵⁹ None of these costs are in the current version of the model.
- It follows therefore that we have not “imputed” costs, for example by assigning a value to loss of welfare caused by depression or family break-up. (Many models include such components: for example Department for Transport cost-benefit analysis models attach a financial quantum to the time saved by motorists and passengers through the use of a new road.) In our view making such assumptions immediately makes the model more controversial because such assumptions are more contestable.
- Equally, we have not attempted to make assumptions about the cause of poor transition and assign them accordingly. The literature is clear that some poor transitions are related to adverse experiences in childhood, prior to a Services career. The model does not seek to account for these: the data is currently poor and the relationship between adverse childhood experience and Services experience is poorly understood.

There is an important consequence for the financial outcomes from the model as a result of these assumptions. **Because they represent conservative assumptions, and because the model includes only direct costs to the state and the third sector, we believe that the model represents the minimum cost of poor transition to the UK.**

Finally, the initial period covered by the model covers the period in which outflows rose because of redundancies caused by Services shrinkage following the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR). In turn this means that the projections show declining overall costs of transition from 2013 through to 2015. This is not a trend, and should not be misread in this way. As outflow numbers re-stabilise, so the costs of poor transition will also stabilise.

The structure of the model

To value the cost of unsuccessful transitions, we developed a an Excel-based decision model incorporating outflows of Service leavers, the proportion of these Service leavers with different types of unsuccessful outcomes and average costs for each type of unsuccessful outcome. (See Figure, below). Where possible, 2012 data was used to establish the base year. This was then projected forwards over the years 2013-2015 using projections for Service leaver outflows consistent with the October 2010 the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

⁵⁹ Coleman, L., and Glenn, F., (2012) *When couples part: Understanding the consequences for adults and children*. Available at <http://www.oneplusone.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/WHEN-COUPLES-PART-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>



Figure 5.1: The structure of the model: flows

Type of subgroup							Type of unsuccessful transition
Service	Rank	Trained/Untrained	Reason for exit	Length of service	Gender	Ethnic origin	
ARMY BE THE BEST WILLAR & TERRITORIAL	Officers	Trained	Voluntary	Less than 4 years	Male	Black and ethnic minority	Unemployment
			Time expiry				Common neurotic disorders
ROYAL NAVY	Other ranks	Un-trained	Redun-dancy	4-6 years	Female	White	PTSD/Psychiatric treatment
			Other Wastage				Alcohol dependency
ROYAL AIR FORCE	Other ranks	Un-trained	Redun-dancy	More than 6 years	Female	Unknown	Drug dependency
			Other Wastage				Criminal offense
							Prison
							Homelessness
							Debt
							Family breakdown

Source: The Futures Company

The SDSR recommended that by 2015 the full-time trained strength of the Navy should decrease by 5,000 to 30,000, the Army by 7,000 to 95,000 and the RAF by 5,000 to 33,000. With some guidance from DASA, we have assumed that these reductions are in the full time trained strength of UK Armed Forces personnel and are spread evenly over the years 2013-2015.

Different types of personnel experience different types of outcome, and the outflow personnel are therefore categorised by seven different types of characteristics, effectively breaking the outflow numbers down into a large number of sub-groups. These sub-groups are consistent with those used by DASA in their outflow statistics, and are described here in the same language used by DASA. As can be seen from the Figure above, the characteristics are:

- Service of origin (Navy, Army, RAF)
- Rank (officers or 'Other Ranks')
- Reason for exit (Voluntary, End of Engagement, Redundancy. Other)
- Length of service, matched against the resettlement entitlement windows (less than four years, four to six years, more than six years)
- Gender (male or female), and
- Ethnic origin, where known.

The model also includes ten types of unsuccessful transitions: unemployment, mental health issues (including two sub types: common neurotic disorders and PTSD / psychiatric treatment), alcohol (harmful drinking), drug abuse, criminal offending, prison sentence, homelessness, debt and family breakdown. In fact, some of these are clearly related, but because of the lack of research and data about *how* they are related, each of these variables is costed separately.



Costs are defined as direct monetary costs to the relevant government departments in dealing with each type of unsuccessful transition (including benefit payments, cost of treatment, costs of civil and criminal justice) plus indirect revenues foregone, including foregone tax receipts (such as income tax and National Insurance payments unpaid due to unemployment; estimates of lost productive output due to alcohol, drugs and mental health issues; costs of advice for debt issues). Costs are calculated on an annual basis, but include carry-over or lagged effects, where these can be identified, that extend beyond the year in which the Service leaver left the Armed Forces. Examples of these lagged effects include long-term unemployment, PTSD/psychiatric treatment, criminal offences and prison sentences. Definitions of each of these transition outcomes are included in a panel at the end of this Chapter.

As mentioned above we have assumed that the types of unsuccessful transitions are mutually exclusive, and the have been costed at an individual per case basis. This means that the model generally takes a conservative view of costs, by excluding overlapping costs that have been valued as a case in another type of unsuccessful transition. So, in most cases we have calculated the costs of individual transition impacts, not costs associated with individual Service leavers. There are two exceptions to this, covering the most common overlaps in problems associated with homelessness, where data can be sourced. A single cost is attached respectively to homeless Service leavers who have mental health problems, and homeless Service leavers with alcohol problems.

In addition to the costs associated with unsuccessful transition impacts on Service leavers, the model also calculates Service leavers' dependants (their wives, husbands, partners and children) who are affected by knock-on health issues (such as depression, anxiety and stress) and applies a cost to these.

Visually, the way the model calculates the costs of poor transition is shown in Figure 2, below.

The years in blue show years calculated with historic data, the years in grey are projected. Looking at the model calculations, a blue box (e.g., "Outflow numbers") represents input data while a green box (e.g., "Numbers of Service leavers with unsuccessful outcomes") represent a calculated output, i.e., one that is generated by the model.

Figure 5.2: The structure of the model: costs



Source: The Futures Company



Overall costs of poor transition

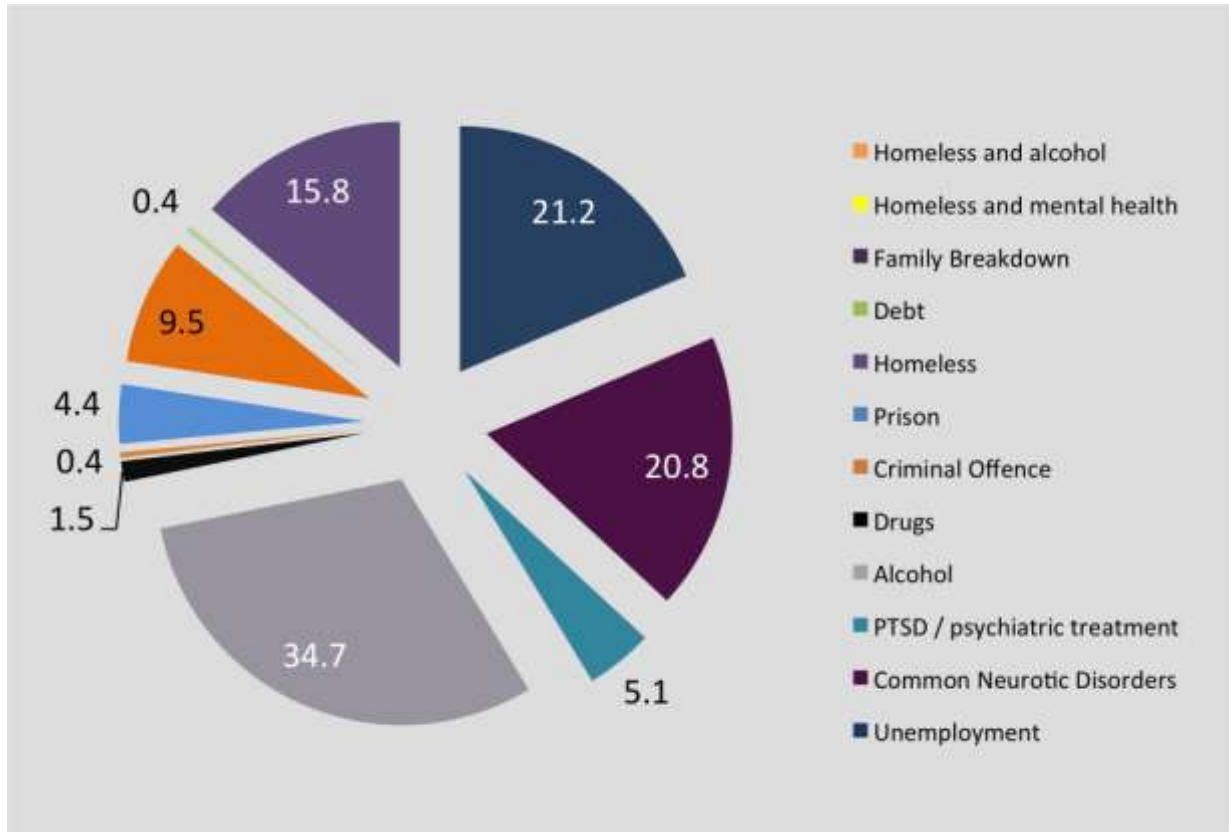
In the base line year, 2012, with 19,950 Service leavers, the model assesses the costs of poor transition as being £113.8 million. Outflow numbers rise in 2013 to 21,683, and then fall to 19,947 in 2014 and to 17,738 in 2015, at which point they begin to settle towards the likely long-term annual outflow figure. The costs of poor transition climb to £122 million in 2013 and then decline to £111 million in 2014 and to £98 million in 2015. As noted this should not create the impression of a declining trend. This fall in costs is almost completely a function of declining outflow numbers, and it is reasonable to regard the long term base level of transition cost as being of the order of £100 million per year.

The split of these costs in 2012 can be seen in Figure 3, below. In summary, alcohol misuse has the largest single effect, followed by mental health issues (“common neurotic disorders” together with PTSD), with unemployment and family breakdown next. As noted above, family breakdown may be understated by the model design.

Homelessness accounts for £5.5 million of costs, and prison £4.4 million. The research identifies that a relatively small number of Service leavers end up in prison, but the costs attaching to each individual who is jailed are very high.



Figure 5.3: The costs of poor transition (£ million), 2012



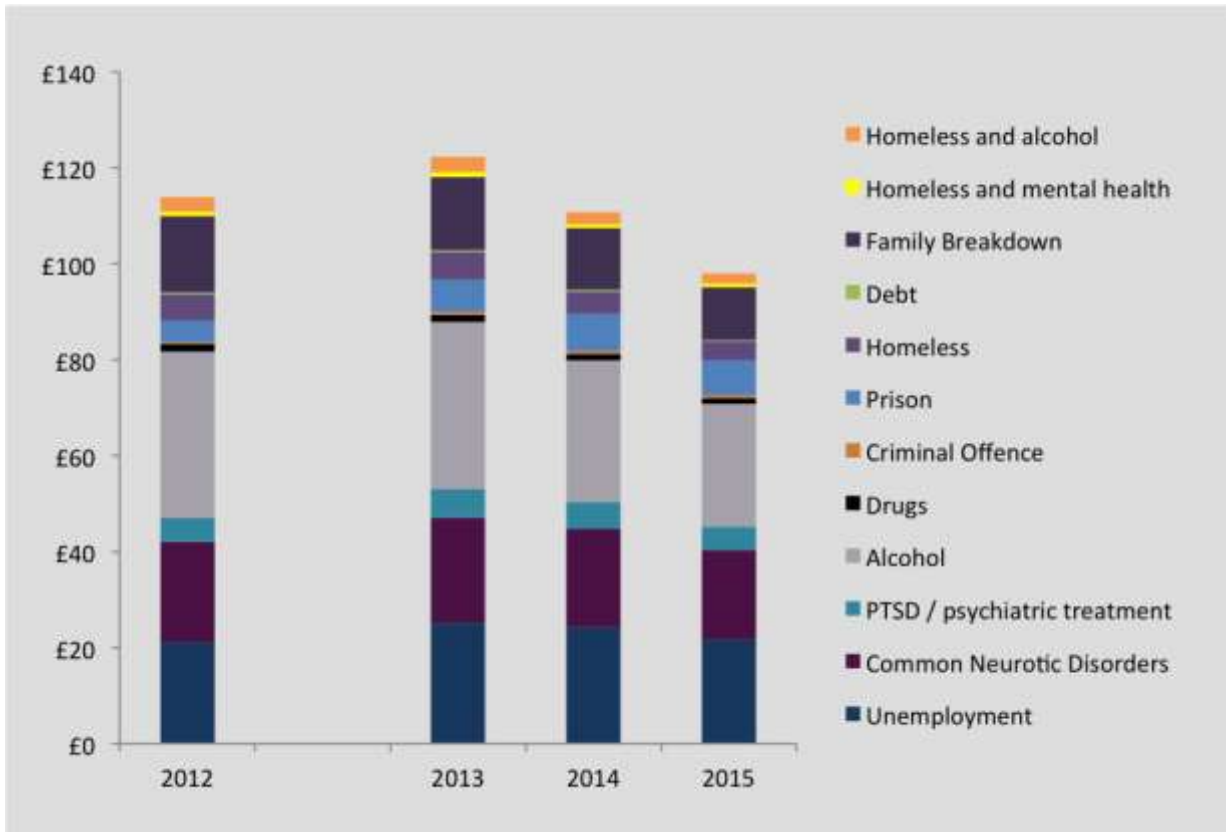
Source: The Futures Company

Figure 5.4, below, projects these transition costs over the next three years, from 2013 to 2015. As can be seen from the bars, the cost of poor transition is projected to rise in 2013, and then fall in 2014 and 2015. This largely follows the changing outflow numbers following the SDSR. Full costs of poor transition from the model are £122 million in 2013, £111 million in 2014, and £98 million in 2015. The proportional costs between different types of transition remain similar.

It should be noted that by 2015, the outflows have returned to their likely stable long-term numbers, although it is possible that there could be further reductions if Army recruitment achieves its objective of losing fewer recruited personnel before the end of training. It is therefore reasonable to assess the direct costs of poor transition to other public bodies and third sector agencies as being of the order of £100 million a year in the medium term. As stated earlier, these are conservative estimates.



Figure 5.4: Projected costs of poor transition (£ million), 2012-2015



Source: The Futures Company

Transition scenarios

The model is designed so that users can assess scenarios in which there has been effective intervention in the transition system and identify the impact of this on overall transition costs. Similarly, if there were policy changes that were likely to have an adverse impact on transition, it is possible to use the model to assess the potential increase in costs. We have run three scenarios to demonstrate how the model works.

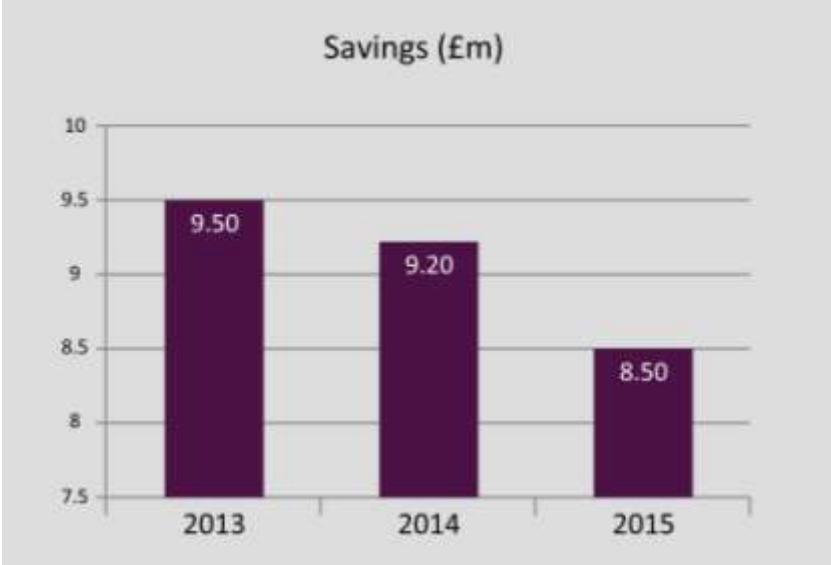
Scenario 1: reducing ESL unemployment

We have tested the reduction in poor transition costs associated with increasing ESL employment outcomes from 52% to 72%. These numbers were chosen as representing the overall effect nationally if the results from the Catterick Future Horizons Programme were replicated for all ESLs.

As can be seen from the figure below, the direct reduction in costs from improved employment outcomes alone show a reduction in transition costs of £9.5 million in 2013, £9.2 million in 2014, and £8.2 million in 2015. In practice, outcomes are likely to be better than this, because better employment outcomes are likely to lead to improved outcomes in other areas as well (for example, mental health outcomes).



Figure 5.5: Scenario modelling of improved ESL employment outcomes

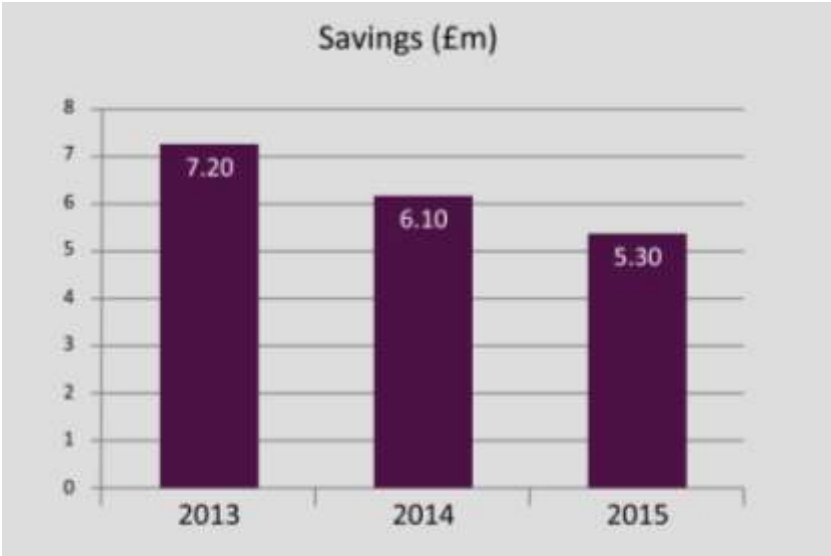


Source: The Futures Company/ FiMT transition model

Scenario 2: reducing alcohol misuse

The second scenario tested for the purposes of this report was a 20% reduction in alcohol misuse. The percentage was chosen because it represents approximately a halving of the gap in alcohol misuse by Service leavers when compared to the population as a whole. As can be seen from Figure 6 below, the benefit of this in reducing transition costs starts at £7 million in 2013 is just over £6 million in 2014, and over £5 million in 2015. As previously these reductions are a function of falling outflow numbers rather than declining efficacy or falling cost per individual.

Figure 5.6: Savings from a 20% reduction in alcohol misuse



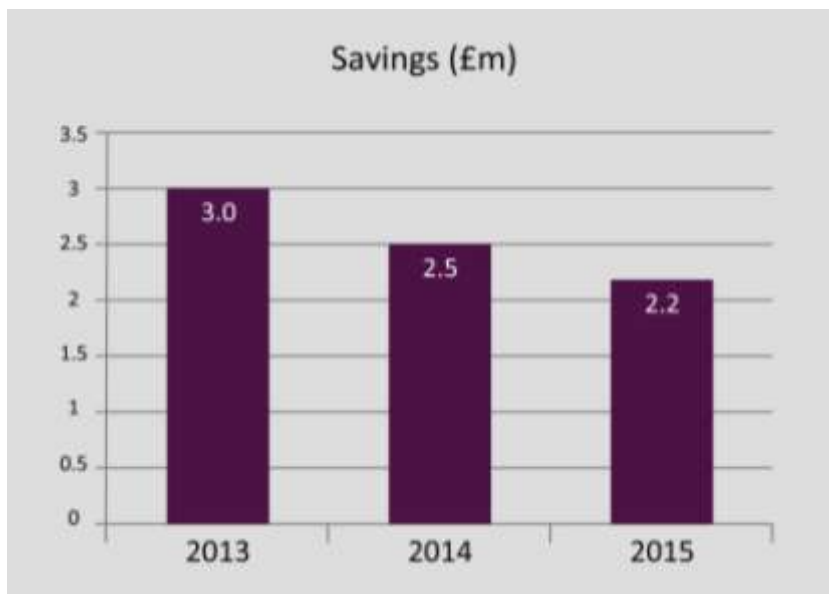
Source: The Futures Company/ FiMT transition model



Scenario 3: Reducing numbers of family breakdown

The third scenario tested was a 20% reduction in family breakdown. Family breakdown was chosen because of the high numbers of Service personnel in transition research reporting relationship strains. As stated above, because the model captures only direct costs, it seems likely that it understates the financial impact of family breakdown. (In general, research in this area reports long-run effects, even generational costs resulting from family breakdown.) However, assessing only the direct costs, Figure 7 shows that a 20% reduction in family breakdown could deliver a saving of £3 million in 2013 and a saving of £2.2 million in 2015.

Figure 5.7: Savings from a 20% reduction in family breakdown



Source: The Futures Company/ FiMT transition model

Conclusion

As can be seen from these three indicative scenarios, one of the purposes of the model is to inform decisions on policy interventions that could improve transition outcomes. In terms of public value it is designed to indicate the likely base level of public benefit from such interventions.



The definitions and costs of each type of unsuccessful transition

Unemployment

Unemployment shows the percentage of Service leavers who are unemployed and claiming benefits six months after they have left the Armed Forces. The average cost to the Treasury per unemployed person per year, is a figure that includes lost tax revenues to the government as well as the direct costs of unemployment and other benefits.

Mental health

“Common neurotic disorders” include anxiety, depression, stress and poor sleep. Cases of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or psychiatric cases of mental ill health are defined by a cut-off score of 50 or greater on the 17-item National Centre for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Checklist (PCL-C). Costs include health and social care costs of the services provided by the NHS and local authorities for people with mental health problems; and the costs of output losses in the economy that result from the adverse effects of mental health problems on people’s ability to work. PTSD / psychiatric cases include additional costs of psychiatric treatment sessions.

Alcohol

Harmful drinking is defined as when a person drinks over the recommended weekly amount of alcohol and experiences health problems that are directly related to alcohol. In some cases, there may be obvious problems such as depression, alcohol-related accidents leading to injury, acute pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas). Many of the health problems that occur as a result of harmful drinking do not cause any symptoms until they reach their most serious stages. These include: high blood pressure (hypertension), cirrhosis (scarring of the liver), some types of cancer, such as mouth cancer and bowel cancer and heart disease. Alcohol costs borne by the taxpayers are costs arising from the excess use of health services and costs of injury to third parties from alcohol related motor accidents or crime incidents; and costs due to lost productive output.

Drugs

Costs associated with drugs use are the average annual cost of medical treatment for problem (Class A) drug users and the additional costs for state benefits including incapacity benefits and lost employment-related taxes.

Prison

Prison costs include the direct expenditure costs met locally by the prison establishments, plus the costs of overheads met centrally by the Ministry of Justice (such as property costs, major maintenance, prisoner escort and custody service and central HQ overheads).

Criminal offending

Criminal offending includes convictions, cautions, reprimands, and warnings. The costs include cost of arrest and court appearances, based on the proportion of those arrested who go to court.



Homelessness

Homelessness includes those accepted by a local authority as unintentionally homeless and in priority need and those sleeping rough, living in a hostel (where the stay is intended to be temporary), living in a bed and breakfast hotel, or staying with friends or family temporarily because they have no home of their own. Costs are of day centre services, hostel accommodation and support and housing benefits. Additional costs are added to a percentage of homeless Service leavers who also have problems associated with mental health and alcohol issues. These additional costs are defined in the same way as common neurotic disorders and alcohol outcomes above.

Family breakdown

Family breakdown includes the costs of divorce or separation in five key areas of public policy: tax and benefits, housing, health and Social Care, civil and criminal Justice, education and young people not in education, employment or training.

Debt

Debt is costed on the basis of the costs of debt advice, where people with debt problems obtained advice from agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, local authority, regulatory authorities and social workers. The cost also includes lost tax and National Insurance payments due to the reduction in income arising from struggling with debt. The model also assumes, conservatively, that some debt advice is successful and leads to more stable finances, and therefore to increased tax and National Insurance receipts. This is because people who received debt advice, on average, had an increase in their annual incomes in the following years as their financial situation, stress, employment situation etc., all improved; therefore this additional income would be subject to income tax and NI payments, leading to extra government revenue which would not have been received without the success of the debt advice.



Chapter 6: Improving the transition process

Introduction

While most Service leavers transition successfully, the research in this report clearly indicates that there is scope for improving transition outcomes and that there is a public financial benefit in doing so. In this summary final chapter we bring together the areas in which improvements should be focussed.

This chapter is broken into four sections, each of which has a different but complementary perspective on improving transition. These are as follows:

- The characteristics of Service leavers who transition successfully
- A delivery framework (the '3Ts') that helps to align implementation with these characteristics
- A set of Guiding Principles derived from the research that are designed to help providers evaluate proposals for new services or act as a health check on existing services
- A review of the recommendations that appeared at the end of Chapters 2, 3, and 4 grouped here by themes to enable easier review.

From the Service leavers' perspective

As will be recalled from Chapter 1, our definition of a good transition used in this report is as follows:

"A good transition is one that enables ex-Service personnel to be sufficiently resilient to adapt successfully to civilian life, both now and in the future. This resilience includes financial, psychological, and emotional resilience, and encompasses the ex-Service person and their immediate families."

In practice, for those who make a good transition there are recurring themes. These can be summarised as:

- **Engagement**
- **Familiarity**
- **Resources**
- **Information**

Engagement

Service leavers engage with the transition process sufficiently early, so their psychological approach to transition is running at the same speed as their transition timetable. Some of this is attitudinal: such leavers are more likely to have been preparing psychologically for transition for more of their Service careers and practically as well. This may take the form of saving money for the time when they have to transition or ensuring that their skills and qualifications are up to date and will be understood by a civilian employer. They are more likely to have a future-facing attitude to their lives: one career is coming to a close, and another one begins.



Familiarity

Leavers have developed some familiarity with the civilian environment that they are moving into, whether this is the civilian workplace or the management of their day-to-day lives in the civilian world. For some this is the most abrupt part of transition, as the benefits of the Services life, and the more protective social and financial environment it can represent, is abruptly removed. Some leavers do make arrangements to get experience of the civilian workplace before they leave, albeit usually for short periods of time. Those who get the opportunity to have their final deployment at home can spread the period of adjustment of the social and emotional side of transition, so that all of the impacts are not felt in a short period of time after discharge.

Resources

Leavers have access to the practical resources they need to be able to manage the transition. By resources, we mean the material resources that cushion the Service leaver against adverse aspects or adverse moments of transition. In particular these refer to a financial buffer such as savings, access to stable housing and work that appropriately reflects the skills and expertise of the Service leaver. (This in turn means that they are likely to be reasonably well paid, when compared to their Services salary.)

Information

Leavers need to have sufficient information before they leave and also need to know where to find further information afterwards. Information covers access both to the information needed to navigate the civilian world (for example, in accessing relevant services, entitlements, benefits and so on) and, when necessary, being able to find and access sources of support in the case of adverse events.

Figure 6.1: Summary of Service leaver transition factors influencing outcomes

	Difficulty experienced in transition when leaving the Forces		
	SORTED	SEMI-SORTED	IN NEED
Engagement	Have prepared for transition by researching, building skills, looking ahead to change.	Have adjusted to transition during resettlement, may have unrealistic expectations	Enjoyed culture and excitement of Services life; or are leaving unexpectedly
Familiarity	Have a job to go to, some experience of civilian workplace, 'civilian' spouse	Expect that civilian workplace will be different, have some non-Forces support to ask.	Few civilian workplace skills, unprepared for organisation required to manage civilian life
Resources	Have some savings, full CTP support, transferable skills, have a home to go to (own or partner)	Some housing access (e.g., rental), some skills, some CTP support	Can't afford rent or deposit, poor skills level, no CTP support
Information	Have close, supportive family, social network, some knowledge of ex-Services organisations	Have close, supportive family but little non-Forces social network, low interest in ex-Services organisations	Absence of family support, little non-Forces social network, distanced from Services

Source: The Futures Company



In practice, of course, these factors tend to be inter-connected. A Services leaver who has engaged early with transition is more likely to have saved money against the transition period, for example. Family recurs as an asset or an absence in several places, in particular in Engagement and Information. And finally, although Resources has an important influence on overall outcomes, the reverse is also true. It is possible to have a strong Resource profile and yet have a poor transition because the Service leaver is disengaged with it or unfamiliar with or unprepared for the transition. A number of such people were identified through the qualitative work and analysis.

Delivery of transition support: the '3Ts'

Aligning transition resources and support to enable the Service leaver to make the most of it is to some extent about finding ways to ensure that the resource is adequately available and flexible so that they are able to draw on it when they need to engage with it. In our research, we evolved the concept of 3Ts to summarise this: that good transition support is about Tailoring, Timing and Take-up.

Tailoring

By 'Tailoring' we mean that the Service leaver works on a more tailored pathway into the civilian world from the Armed Forces. Initially, this sounds more expensive, though it need not be. Some of the changes required might involve a simplification of some of the current transition services and a greater focus on how the skills of the Service leaver can be aligned with employers' expectations.

By implication, this might also involve more profiling in terms of attitudes and aptitudes ahead of the transition period. Given the development of more sophisticated analytics now widely in use by human resources departments and recruiters, much of the change might be in the upfront development or adaptation of existing packages to help leavers build up a better understanding of their own profile.

Tailoring also appears to improve outcomes significantly, judging by the evidence of the Catterick Future Horizons Programme, where employment outcomes among ESLs have jumped by 20 percentage points with a relatively light approach to tailoring.

"The CTP workshop was great, but it was quite a big class, one tutor... if it was more separated by rank and the they focused a bit more on personalised, one-to-one time, to work individually with people on their CV and their plans, that would make it better." (Male, 30, Voluntary Redundancy, Army)

Timing

For those who do not access CTP programmes, the resettlement period can be quite short. Even for those who do, the period of resettlement and CTP support can go by quickly: from our research, people are sometimes surprised that they no longer have access to their CTP adviser when the two years after discharge is up. In general, the research suggests that some issues that are currently addressed within the transition window could usefully be addressed at other times.

For example, issues concerning financial awareness and the need to plan financially for transition should be addressed earlier in the Service career, if only because it will take longer to build up a stock of savings; by the time transition arrives it is too late to do much. Similarly, greater awareness of civilian housing issues might help Service personnel plan for a more stable transition.



Equally, there is evidently a virtue in giving Services personnel sustained exposure to civilian workplaces during resettlement, before they have to make their transition career decisions, and perhaps before they make decisions about resettlement training, where they are entitled to it. In general, the principle here is that where earlier information has the potential to affect Service personnel's perspective on transition, and therefore influence transition positively, the process should be phased to help this to happen.

"I think there should be a little cool down period, and then someone talk to them ... Don't even let them know you're waiting, because it'll make them feel like you're saying they're nutty, but on the sly, let them have a little while to unwind, then ring them up and say, 'by the way, we're running this service..." (Male, 23, Medically Discharged, Army)

Take-up

The formal transition processes work to their own schedules. However, for some, this does not help. As discussed above, they may not be psychologically ready for transition, or they may have had too much information to manage, or they need some time to make important decisions at an important moment of their lives. In other words, there are reasons why people may need to engage at different times on their own terms. There is a clear view that there is stigma around asking for help, both in official circles and among respondents to our research.⁶⁰ For these individuals, informal guides that help them find support they can use is often a critical step in changing a faltering transition journey into a more successful one. That support can come from families or through informal online peer-to-peer forums. It is also possible that "buddy" systems that involve informal mentoring (currently being piloted) will also help to improve take-up.⁶¹ There appears to be scope for employee-based schemes among employers that take on significant numbers of ex-Service personnel. The key, however, is being able to access support when it is being "pulled" by the Service leaver rather than "pushed" by the resettlement timetable.

"There should be some kind of follow-up ... I don't think at the time of first leaving, what they're going to do and what kind of support they're going to need. And at that point you might be looking for different information to when you first left—they'd have a better understanding then of what path they're going to take." (Female, wife of Service leaver)

Stakeholder survey recommendations

As part of the research, we surveyed sector stakeholders. This was done through an online survey, and all member organisations within the sector umbrella Confederation of Service Charities (cobseo) were invited to take part. In the event, the survey, which ran for a month in December and January 2012-13 attracted 78 responses from 58 organisations.

The research included questions to stakeholders about actions that could improve the outcomes of transition. The list of actions had emerged from the initial desk research, the stakeholder interviews and workshop, and from the first part of the qualitative research. As can be seen from the chart, the top six recommendations, from a stakeholder perspective, were to:

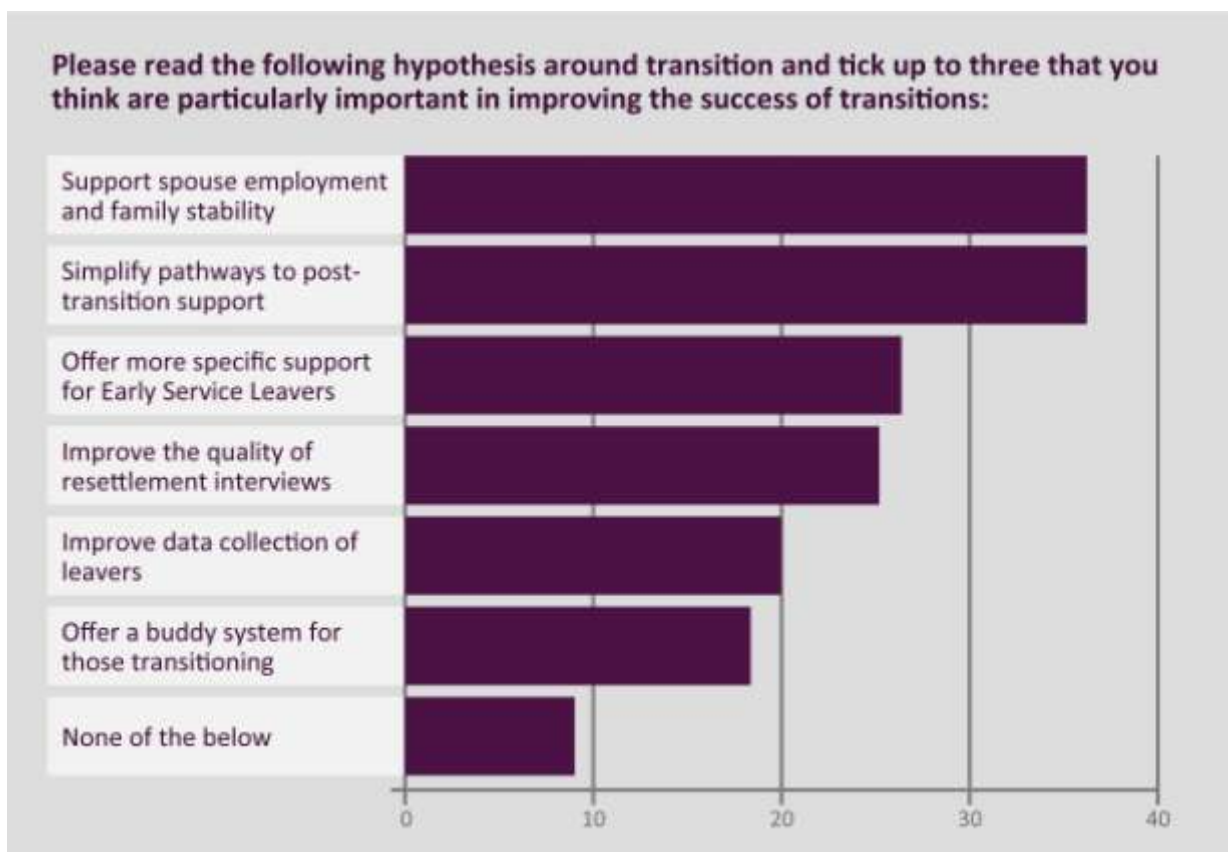
⁶⁰ Note, however, that research by King's College Centre for Military Health Research on cohorts that had left the Armed Forces prior to the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq found no difference in the willingness of Service-leavers to seek help on mental health issues when compared to the general population. (Source: Stakeholder interview).

⁶¹ See also: van Staden, L., Fear, N., Iversen, A. et al., (2007). "Young military veterans show similar help seeking behaviour", letter *British Medical Journal*. Volume 334, February 2007



- Simplify pathways to post-transition support
- Support spouse employment and family stability
- Offer more specific support for ESLs
- Improve the quality of resettlement interviews
- Improve data collection on Service leavers
- Offer a buddy system for those transitioning.

Figure 6.2: Stakeholder preferences on improving transition



Source: The Futures Company/Forces in Mind Trust

In addition there is a concern that too many organisations are resulting in overlap of efforts, hence potentially missing out on reducing costs:

“There needs to be a consolidation of as many Service charities as possible into two or three maximum. It is disgraceful to have so many CEOs, GS and duplicated staff covering this small area” (Stakeholder survey)



Chapter 7: Themes, recommendations and Guiding Principles

At the end of Chapters 2, 3 and 4, which addressed the detail of the transition process during service, in resettlement, and after discharge, there were recommendations to improve the overall outcomes of the process.

Reviewing these, it can be seen that most of these recommendations (some 26 in all) are linked by a smaller number of recurring themes.

The themes are as follows:

- Creating transferable skills
- Creating independence
- Personalising the pathway
- Engaging with the family
- Tracking the right things
- Investing to reduce transition risk.

In this section we summarise these themes and connect the recommendations thematically rather than by the length of time served in the Armed Forces. Part of the rationale for this approach is that one of the criticisms of transition is that there are places in the system where the processes fail Service leavers because it is insufficiently joined up. By looking at the potential changes through a thematic lens, it is possible to be clearer about the connections that could improve the overall transition process.

In the table below, recommendations are grouped by theme and phased by the stage of the Service leavers' journey where they are most relevant. The numbers attached to each recommendation, which is summarised in the table, cross-refer to the list of recommendations at the end of Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Not all stages have recommendations under all themes. At this stage we have not indicated who is best placed to assess or act on a given recommendation: we understand that this work will be done by FiMT in due course in discussion with relevant stakeholders.



Themes

<p>Create transferable skills: ensure Service leavers have sufficient and appropriate skills and qualifications to prosper in the civilian world, and that these are in a form that is recognised by civilian employers.</p>		
<p><i>Prior to joining/In service</i></p> <p>R2.2: Personal skills programme (p. 27)</p> <p>R2.3 Increase alignment of military vocational training with civilian skills requirements (p. 27)</p> <p>R2.7 No individual left behind (GCSE Maths and English) (p. 28)</p>	<p><i>Resettlement</i></p> <p>R3.3 Improved expectations management about civilian work (p. 44)</p> <p>R3.4 Structured work experience (p. 44)</p> <p>R3.5 Aligning existing qualifications with civilian expectations (p. 44)</p>	<p><i>Transition</i></p> <p>R4.4 Work placements or contract work opportunities to enable more flexible routes into work (p. 57)</p>
<p>Create independence: build habits of independence among Service leavers to help them adjust to the demands of the civilian world.</p>		
<p><i>Prior to joining/In service</i></p> <p>R2.4 Financial awareness training (p. 27)</p> <p>R2.5 Savings programme (p. 27)</p>	<p><i>Resettlement</i></p> <p>R3.7 Intervention to break the dependency culture (p. 44)</p>	<p><i>Transition</i></p> <p>R4.5 Review post-Services housing provision (p. 57)</p>
<p>Personalise the pathway: enable Service leavers to tailor their pathway out of the Services so that it matches their skills and experience to their aspirations</p>		
	<p><i>Resettlement</i></p> <p>R3.2 Develop a tailored needs-based pathway (p. 43)</p> <p>R3.10 Increase the consistency of resettlement information delivery (p. 45)</p>	<p><i>Transition</i></p> <p>R4.2 Improve informal support (p. 57)</p> <p>R4.6 Single point of contact (p. 57)</p>
<p>Engage with the families: ensure the family do not get lost during transition and that they get the help they need, and that they are able to act as a source of support if needed.</p>		
	<p><i>Resettlement</i></p> <p>R3.6 Home deployments at end of service (p. 44)</p> <p>R3.9 Formalise involvement of families in resettlement where appropriate (p. 45)</p>	<p><i>Transition</i></p> <p>R4.1 Increase engagement between families and charities to improve Service leavers' engagement (p. 57)</p>



<p>Track the right things: build deeper knowledge of the transition path and where it does well or less well, to improve transition outcomes.</p>		
<p><i>Prior to joining/In service</i></p> <p>R2.1 Profile recruits prior to joining and on completion of training (connects to R 2.2) (p. 27)</p>		<p><i>Transition</i></p> <p>R4.8 Broader KPIs (beyond employment) (p. 58)</p> <p>R4.9 Improve research and monitoring (p. 58)</p>
<p>Invest to reduce transition risk: commit resources appropriately to reduce the public and social costs of poor transitions</p>		
	<p><i>Resettlement</i></p> <p>R 3.1 Improve needs assessment for all leavers (not just those 'at risk') (p. 43)</p> <p>R 3.8 More resources directed at ESLs (p. 44)</p>	<p><i>Transition</i></p> <p>R4.3 Better structured support for ESLs (p. 57)</p>

R4.7 (on page 58 of this report), which falls outside of these themes, is that an audit or map of the charity landscape is a necessary building block to better understand how the Services charity sector can better support transition.



Guiding Principles

The purpose of this research is to improve transition outcomes for individuals leaving the Armed Forces, regardless of the circumstances of their departure. However, it can be hard for organisations to know how to interpret research and apply it in practice. In this section, therefore, we have distilled the insight gained from interviewing stakeholders, from analysing existing research, and from our own research and modelling into a set of ‘Guiding Principles’ that summarise the key findings in a way that can be used as a checklist by an organisation that is considering developing new services or is reviewing existing services.

1. Keep the big picture in sight

It is possible in the complexity of transition to lose sight of the overall objective: that the Service leaver moves from working and living in a military environment to living and working in a civilian environment, and in a way that feels comfortable for them. Their transition is likely to involve financial, psychological and emotional elements, and can be derailed if one of these elements is less successful. (See, for example, the research that says that higher debt is likely to lead to worse mental health outcomes). When a Service leaver says they've turned down a job that involves working offshore because they want to be closer to their families, they are making it clear that they are looking at the whole picture. Agencies and charities need to do the same.

Question: How do you make sure that you understand the whole context of the Service leaver?

2. Everyone is different

Some of the most effective transition support appears to come from listening to the Service leaver, understanding their resources, skills and aspirations, and helping them to develop a route back into the civilian world that capitalises on these. While complete personalisation is expensive to deliver, transition support should at least provide the benefits of ‘mass customisation’, which enables the Service leaver to build up a transition package from a number of options. The present system, in contrast, offers a huge level of personalisation to those with the most entitlement, and virtually none to Early Service Leavers.

Question: To what extent are you able to tailor your service to the Service leaver?

3. Look at the experience through the users’ eyes

Providing a service can make it harder to see the world through the eyes of a service user or a potential user. Commercial organisations which are alert to this issue (and not all are) will use research models such as “customer journeys” or methods such as “mystery shopping” to understand better what it is like to be in the shoes of a user. In the world of transition, which can be hard for the user to navigate, and where some are reluctant to ask for help, this is a harder challenge. It is hard, for example, to establish the experience of potential users who are completely unaware of a service. In an environment where Service leavers report that it can be hard to ask for (but easier to be offered) help, and where some research reports a stigma attached to some forms of help (e.g., mental health) it is essential that services build a picture of their service through the eyes of possible users.

Question: Do you know how Service leavers learn about your service and then find it?



4. Build on skills

Those who are likely to have the hardest time in transition are those who are young, have left early, and who had fewer skills when they joined. The MOD reports progress in this area, yet individuals may need basic investment in literacy and numeracy skills to become appropriately employable. Beyond this, though, there is a world in which qualifications gained in the Services do not translate directly into the civilian world, either because their military component deflects a civilian employer, or because, formally or legally, the civilian world needs a different certificate. There is also a softer aspect to this, of Service leavers finding it difficult to interpret the skills they have gained in the Armed Forces in a way that makes sense to a civilian employer. Transition will work better for everyone (including prospective employers) with a greater focus in the resettlement phase and afterwards on how best to align skills learned in the Services with those needed by non-military employers.

Question: How do you help Service leavers to reframe their skills for civilian employment?

5. Keep the family in mind

The research found two different types of Service families: those who had lived the Services life and were in effect transitioning at the same time, and those who had not. Neither were fully prepared for the impact of transition, but in different ways. Families are the first port of call when there is a setback during transition, and the first type is typically well networked within the “extended military” but is having to go through its own transition, changing homes, jobs and schools. The second type is a much better guide for the Service leaver to civilian life, but is less well-versed in sources of support. Because of the support role played by families during transition (and this can extend to parents and siblings), they need more support themselves. There are two reasons for this: the first is they can be a valuable conduit for getting information to the Service leaver. The second is that there is a risk of family break-up during the stress of transition, and interventions that reduce the risk of this are likely to be socially beneficial and self-financing.

Question: How do you engage with families?

6. Don't under-estimate civilian culture shock

The civilian world can be a world full of surprises for the Service leaver, ranging from the financial surprise of utility and rent deposits to the cultural surprise of the very different approach to the working environment in many civilian businesses. And although Service personnel sometimes joke about it being hard to earn as much outside of the Armed Forces, this can be a shock as well. Service leavers sometimes need to adjust to status differences outside of the Armed Forces and to adjust their expectations about how transferable their skills are. The conclusion is that the successful transition is a cultural transition as well, and that resettlement and transition need to pay more attention to this cultural element. This might include the opportunity to have periods of work experience in civilian employers during the resettlement period or more consideration to the benefits of some shorter contract-based employment to try different types of employers.

Question: How do you help users understand the cultural aspects of transition?

7. Emotional time is different from transition schedule

Transition time—like much of military life—works on a fairly structured timescale, at least for planned transitions. (This is not so true for medical and administrative discharges.) But different personnel have different psychological readiness for transition, depending on their general attitude to life and



the circumstances of their departure. In particular Early Service Leavers may not take in the resettlement information they need at the point they are told about it. There remains a suspicion among some leavers we spoke to that some officers are more concerned about being seen to fulfil their duty of care than help a given Service leaver make the most of the resettlement resources available to them. Some flexibility, to allow individuals to engage appropriately when they are psychologically ready to do so, would help improve transition outcomes.

Question: How do you help Service leavers access resources when they are ready to make use of them?

8. Mental health matters

The review of other research, interviews with stakeholders, and the modelling, make it clear that issues of mental health and also alcohol dependency are important issues influencing poorer transitions. Mental health issues in particular influence disproportionately the decision of Early Service Leavers to leave, although it is not yet clear whether this is because of Services life or combat, or from earlier life experiences. While post-traumatic stress disorder is rightly now receiving a greater focus, the research suggests that depression is a more common issue. In this regard, the Mental Health Plan prepared by Dr Andrew Murrison is welcome in that it proposes increases in both monitoring and relevant resources available to Service leavers from the NHS.⁶²

Question: How do you identify and understand mental health and alcohol issues when working with Service leavers?

9. Join the dots between support pathways

The complexity of the Services charity sector—and therefore of its illegibility to users and potential users—was a repeated theme from stakeholders, existing research, and also Service leavers' interviews. There are many specialist charities (more than 180 under the cobseo banner alone, ranging from the small to the huge) and it is hard to navigate between them if you do need help. One stakeholder spoke to us of having "three A4 pages" just of helplines. The question for the charity sector is not, "how do people find us?" But "Why are people who are looking for help and whom we are set up to assist **not** able to find us?" There is a second question as well: do people who need help fall between charities because of the way they define their role? Research by others and our research with Service leavers and their families suggests this is an issue.

Question: How do you make sure that Service leavers make the most of the resources that can help them?

10. Face the future

The evidence from the research and elsewhere indicates that Service leavers who are looking forwards towards their civilian life have better outcomes than those who are looking back at the highlights or lowlights of their Services career. (This might reasonably be the subject of further research.) Psychological profiling could help to identify which Service leavers are likely to find this easier or harder. There is an increasing body of what might be called a "personal futures" literature that is

⁶² Murrison, A. (2010), *Fighting Fit: A mental health plan for servicemen and veterans*. Available through: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/27375/20101006_mental_health_Report.pdf



designed to help individuals take action to shape their personal future to their benefit.⁶³ Some of this thinking could usefully be incorporated into transition planning.

Question: How do you help Service leavers take a view of the future in your work with them?

A different transition model?

If we were designing a new transition model on a blank piece of paper, would we inevitably come up with a design that looks like the current transition arrangements? The answer is: probably not.

Stakeholders have observed to us that employee recruitment models in the civilian world have two significant features that are different from the current Services transition model.

- Employers pay recruitment services for providing them with personnel, not the other way around. Typically, an employer will pay a proportion of an individual's starting salary as a fee to the recruiter, or will—in the case of shorter-term contracts—receive a fee that represents a proportion of the individual's hourly earnings. In other words, the financial flow is the other way around.
- This changes the nature of the relationship between the recruiting organisation and the employers. In particular it means that the organisation needs to listen more to the employment market about the skills that are being looked for and the way they are expressed through qualifications and experience.

By reversing the financial transaction involved in the recruitment process, this model also helps to change the basis of transition support without undermining the current entitlement-led system. Effectively it would create a flow of funds that would enable the Services to provide tailored support to those who can benefit from it (including those who do not currently have entitlement to CTP support), and who in turn represent a potential source of revenue to the recruitment agency.

Under such a model, the Ministry Of Defence could still choose to devolve funds to support the transition of those individuals that had earned additional support through their service years. However, the use of this support would be informed by better knowledge of what employers are looking for now and in the medium-term future.

There are other likely benefits of such a model. Firstly, it should make it easier to arrange work placements and short-term work, if this is regarded as a useful way to increase the success of transition (a view strongly put to us by stakeholders and Service leavers). Second, there is no reason why an individual should not have a relationship with a commercial part of the agency that extends beyond two years, if they find themselves looking for work in the future. These represent a potential revenue stream, not a public cost. In turn, this increases the flexibility of the employment transition: some individuals may actively prefer to work on a contract basis for a number of employers while they find their feet in the civilian workplace, whereas the current system emphasises the importance of securing full-time work.

⁶³ Barber, M. (2012), *Getting Your Future Right*, Australian Strategic Planning Institute; and Verne Wheelwright (2010), *It's Your Future*, Personal Futures Network.



Appendix

Full list of recommendations

In Service (from page 26)

Recommendation 2.1 Pre-joining profiling. As part of the recruitment screening, candidates should be profiled for their aptitude for personal development. This should be a factor in recruitment; it is likely to produce better outcomes both during their time in the Armed Forces and afterwards.

Recommendation 2.2 Personal skills programme. As part of each individual's objectives, they are required to develop a personal skills programme, to build up skills that are valuable both during their military career and after.

Recommendation 2.3 Increase alignment of military vocational training with civilian skills. At present some of the Armed Forces' vocational training is too geared towards military skills. Some is aimed too low, with the level of attainment not valued by employers. The Ministry Of Defence should collaborate with employers to align its vocational courses more closely.

Recommendation 2.4 Financial awareness training. The Armed Forces is a cushioned world in which the full costs of accommodation and food, in particular, are not always clearly visible to the individual, and are sometimes subsidised. In any case, this means very low levels of awareness among Service personnel of the actual cost of living. Awareness training would help. The timing of this is critical: it needs to be close enough to the resettlement period to have some resonance but far enough ahead of discharge for individuals to develop the necessary personal financial management skills.

Recommendation 2.5 Savings programme. Military personnel have the same access to savings programmes as non-military, but because the period immediately after leaving the military is expensive (quickly requiring deposits for housing and other services), they have more need to build up some savings. A structured savings programme would help.

Recommendation 2.6 Reduce intensity of deployment. Intensity of deployment, not duration (the number of months in a given time period), is more likely to create adverse mental health outcomes. This issue is expected to diminish as the UK withdraws from Afghanistan and the nature of its military commitments changes. However, guidance on maximum proportion of time deployed should be strongly enforced.

Recommendation 2.7 No individual left behind. Any Serviceman or Servicewoman who serves a four year term should leave with GCSEs in Maths and English, which creates a platform for employability.

Resettlement (from page 43)

Recommendation 3.1 Needs assessment. As part of the resettlement process there should be a thorough needs assessment which takes into account both what the Service person is *entitled to* and what they will *need* in order to make a successful transition. This should be different to the current vulnerability assessment and should take into account factors such as civilian employability, savings and financial stability, housing and emotional support. This may mean that it will be necessary to arrange for some types of support which the Service person is not entitled to, particularly in the case of ESLs.

Recommendation 3.2 Tailored pathway (needs based). The needs assessment should inform a tailored pathway which should be put together for every Service person during resettlement. There is a need for a more structured



and tailored action plan for transition into civilian employment. To optimise the usefulness of such an action plan, the sooner it can be put together and more closely it can be monitored in terms of 'steps achieved,' the better the likely impact. The current CTP workshop is considered by many to be too generic as it attempts to cater for too large a range of needs (across ranks and functions) and fails to tailor to individual needs. Many Services personnel would benefit from one-to-one consultation, similar to a careers advice consultation, in which a skills assessment would be made to suggest some viable next steps (in terms of either a new career, or building on in service skills). This would inform tailored advice about how best to spend training allowances and which courses would be most relevant.

Recommendation 3.3 Expectation management. Many Service personnel lack realistic expectations about the civilian employment market. Integrating greater understanding of the civilian employment market into the resettlement process will be important to better manage disappointment and demotivation upon leaving. This would lead to increased awareness and understanding of civilian work environments and culture, as well as improved understanding and expectations of likely levels of seniority and salary in a civilian employment role if moving sideways or starting in a new career, trade or industry.

Recommendation 3.4 Work experience. Ex-Service personnel who have very limited or no experience of civilian employment, are also unlikely to have done a formal interview or application process for some time, if at all. There is a need for some experience of civilian employment environment, roles and recruitment processes. This would offer a 'taster' of potential career, trade or industry options, and a chance to find a good fit in terms of skills and culture *before* the main priority becomes bringing in an income and possibilities to experiment are more limited.

Recommendation 3.5 Aligning qualifications. Some ex-Service personnel find that despite having many service related qualifications, these are often invalid in the civilian employment market or are not recognised outside the Services. Part of the process of resettlement should allow Service personnel to 'translate' their qualifications into civilian qualifications to make them valid for civilian employment. This would enable Service personnel to find employment using similar skills to those gained in service without having to personally invest in 'retraining' to gain expensive certificates for skills they already possess. It may be that this could be offered through a low interest/zero interest loan scheme, to allow people to invest in making their qualifications transferable at a time when cash-flow is likely to be low upon leaving.

Recommendation 3.6 Home deployments. A Service person's final posting can make a significant difference to their ability to prepare and take up entitlements. If they are posted away on operational tour in the year or two prior to leaving, they have a reduced ability to prepare mentally and focus on impending life-change, and are also practically unable to access courses and workshops. Guaranteeing a final posting at a home base would lead to significantly smoother transitions. If this role can be in a more 'civilianised' environment (e.g., office-based), ex-Service personnel report experiencing a lower feeling of 'culture shock' when entering the civilian employment market, as part of their 'transition' starts before they leave the Services when they start a more 'civilianised' job. Ideally this should be at a location close to where the Service person intends to live after leaving.

Recommendation 3.7 Increasing levels of independence. One of the big shifts required for successful transition is a shift in mind-set from more dependent/collective to more independent. There is an opportunity to start to change the mind-set whilst still serving, This could be done with some practical measures such as increasing accountability of personnel for their own outgoings from their salaries as they move towards discharge to increase the degree of self-management.

Recommendation 3.8 More resource into ESLs. Data suggest that the group most vulnerable to a poor transition is the ESLs, who are also the group not entitled to CTP support. Investing in or redistributing some resource to provide greater support to ESLs is likely to result in a lower number of poor transitions. This group are most likely to be in need of further training or basic qualifications to enter the civilian employment market. (The figures for ESL are currently not reflected in the 85% figure cited for successful transitions which only accounts for those in receipt of CTP support.)



Recommendation 3.9 Formal involvement of families in the resettlement process. Families—spouses, partners, parents and siblings—are central to the transition guidance, as sources of support and information, sometimes as the first port of call in a storm. Engaging the families as well as the individuals who are transitioning is an essential building block in improving transition.

Recommendation 3.10 Increasing the consistency of resettlement delivery information. We understand that procedures have been improved, and that there is greater consistency now than in the past. However, there still appear to be differences between services and our research suggests that the quality of the initial resettlement briefing is very dependent on the individual officer or NCO giving it. Improving consistency, and increasing the period over which information is given, is likely to improve engagement of Service leavers.

Transition (from page 57)

Recommendation 4.1 Engage the family. Families acting as support could benefit from better access to information about sources of support and entitlement, to help them fulfil more effectively their role as indirect advisors. This would help overcome the barrier of perceived stigma associated with seeking help, support or advice, by proving an indirect way of reaching Service leavers through family members, and would offer a clear point of contact for family members whose practical or financial circumstances are impacted by the return of an ex-Service person. There is also a clear case for providing more support to families who have lived the military life, and are in effect transitioning themselves.

Recommendation 4.2 Improved informal support. This would be a way of offering one-to-one advice on some of the ‘softer’ more emotional challenges of transition and coping mechanisms, with the opportunity to ask questions in a culturally familiar relationship (i.e., peer-to-peer, which is regarded as more equal and therefore has less stigma associated with it). We are aware that there have been pilot schemes to test such informal support, and that outcomes have been mixed. There is a clear expressed need; effective implementation may require better service design.

Recommendation 4.3 Better structured support for ESLs. ESLs get minimal resettlement support from the Armed Forces, but are less likely to find employment, and are more likely to report mental health issues after leaving. The evidence suggests in general that younger less skilled or less educated ex-Service personnel transition more poorly. The costs of such poor transitions fall on the budgets of other Government departments (such as DWP and Department of Health) in unanticipated ways, and sometimes become crises, which are more expensive to manage. From a public policy perspective, more structured support should reduce overall public costs of poor transition.

Recommendation 4.4 Access to work placements after resettlement. The courses offered during resettlement to retrain in a new profession are considered a valuable ‘starting point’ to, for example, starting in a new trade, but do not qualify ex-Service personnel to start practicing immediately or have the experience or network to ‘hit the ground running’. Connecting them with a professional already working in that field to offer them an internship or apprenticeship, or a period of contract work, would be one way to ease the transition from having had some initial training to becoming a practicing professional.

Recommendation 4.5 Review post-Services housing provision. Difficulties in finding appropriate and affordable accommodation emerged strongly as an issue during the qualitative research and in the research review. While it is not the task of the Armed Forces to address the overall housing challenges in the UK, there are specific issues that affect ex-Service personnel adversely, such as poorer access to social housing. This is a hugely complex issue: a specialist research study should review the systemic issues and identify interventions that could improve outcomes.

Recommendation 4.6 One single point of contact and support. There are hundreds of charities and organisations that offer help and advice to ex-Service personnel, but navigating them and finding the right one for a particular need can be a struggle. Even practitioners commented on the number of charities, their degree of specialisation and the level of difficulty in understanding which charity did what. There is a need for one single point of contact (e.g.,



one phone number or one website) through which ex-Service personnel can be referred to the right place for their specific circumstances and needs. This would significantly improve the prospects of ex-Service personnel being able to find the right resource when they need it.

Recommendation 4.7 Mapping the Services charity landscape. The complexity and the fragmentation of the Services charity landscape are evident. A valuable building block towards one single point of contact would be to map the charity landscape through an audit of available resources, which would make a handover more straightforward, and also identify whether there are – geographic or functional - gaps in provision. An indicative piece of work has been done as part of this project. We understand that FiMT plans a more substantial piece of research in this area.

Recommendation 4.8 Broader KPIs. Whilst a significant number of ex-Service personnel (predominantly amongst those entitled to CTP support) find employment after leaving, the current metrics for measuring success of transition are limited to whether or not the ex-Service person is in employment. There is a need for a measurement of success which accounts for some of the ‘softer’ characteristics of civilian employment, which inform long term success of the ex-Service person. More holistic factors such as levels of satisfaction with employment, ability to stay in the same role for an extended period of time and longer term prospects for professional development would be helpful measures to foresee longer term success during and after transition.

Recommendation 4.9 Improve research and monitoring. Data on ex-Service personnel’s circumstances after leaving is patchy and under-representative in particular of those not entitled to CTP support. There is a need for more comprehensive monitoring of ex-Service personnel after leaving to be able to develop a clearer picture of transition outcomes and factors that influence more or less successful transition. This data could also be used to inform profiling (Recommendation 2.1, Chapter 2) during recruitment.



Methodology

Summary of process

The project process used brought together a number of workstreams to build a rounded picture of transition. The workstreams were as follows:

- Research Review
- Hypothesis Testing
- Qualitative Research
- Quantitative Modelling.

The final two workstreams ran in parallel, since both were able to build on the initial two workstreams.



Research review.

The initial phase of the work was a structured literature review, looking across the material published by a wide range of organisations, from the MOD to charities to academic research organisations. This was supported by two further activities: a process of collection of relevant data, to inform the development of the quantitative model, and selected interviews with stakeholders, to understand their perceptions of relevant issues and emerging questions about the transition process.

Hypothesis Testing

The material gathered under Stage 1 was then synthesised into a number of hypotheses about routes to improving transition, and in turn this enabled us to identify significant issues to inform both the qualitative phase of research and the quantitative modelling work.

To broaden our understanding of views of the transition process beyond those able to attend the hypothesis workshop, we followed it with an online survey that was sent to all cobseo members. 78 individual responses were received from 58 organisations.

Qualitative Research

The qualitative phase consisted of depth interviews with a cross section of individuals going through transition, having left the forces, and a number of groups with family members. Some “ethnographic interviews” were also conducted with Services leavers and their spouses or partners. The respondents came from across all three Services, included people with very different lengths of service, and who had left for different reasons (including End of Engagement, Voluntary Release, and Medical Discharge). Interviews were conducted at a number of locations across the UK. All interviews were conducted in the homes of respondents.



The breakdown of interviewees is as follows: Service leaver interviewees, 29, of which 21 were depth interviews and eight were ethnographic interviews. 21 of the Service leaver interviews were with former Army personnel, seven were with former RAF personnel, and nine with former Navy personnel, broadly reflecting the ratio of leavers by Service. 26 family members were involved in the research, 18 in three ‘mini-groups’ of six people each, eight in the ethnographic research with partners or spouses. Recruitment was by “free find”, using recruiters’ databases, to ensure that the willingness of respondents to engage with the research was not skewed by their transition experience.

To deepen our understanding of the transition process, the 29 Service leavers who did depth interviews were also asked to fill out workbooks in advance identifying high and low points of their transition, their perspective on the state of their transition, and so on. These workbooks provided a valuable further layer of insight, in particular about particular pressure points in the transition process.

Quantitative Modelling

In parallel with the qualitative research, we developed a quantitative model of the direct costs of unsuccessful transition. This process is described in Chapter 5. However, to summarise the key points here, it is an Excel-based decision model that breaks down outflow numbers by type of leaver, assigns the proportion that might experience one of a specified number of poor outcomes, and then assigns a cost to each poor outcome. With two specific assumptions, we have not tried to assign relationships or probabilities to multiple outcomes, although it seems possible, even probable, that some poor transition outcomes are likely to be related. However, at present the research and data on individual transition outcomes is not sufficiently detailed to be able to assign such relationships with any degree of confidence. This is likely to change over time, and the model has been designed to allow such information to be incorporated into it at a later stage. It also permits the assessment of ‘what if?’ scenarios to calculate the value of improving transition outcomes. Sources for the data used in the model are included in the Model Guide, provided to FiMT separately.

As stated in the report, the model includes only direct costs of poor transition (and benefits of intervention) and therefore represents a very conservative view of transition costs to the UK as a whole.

Analysis

The findings from the multiple workstreams were analysed and synthesized to produce the set of Recommendations and Guiding Principles included in the report.



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