

# DEPLOYMENT TO **EMPLOYMENT**

EXPLORING THE VETERAN EMPLOYMENT GAP IN THE UK



**LIVE ON**

THE ROYAL BRITISH  
LEGION



Registered charity number 219279  
[www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk)

# ABOUT THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

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The Royal British Legion was created as a unifying force for the military charity sector at the end of WWI, and still remains one of the UK's largest membership organisations. We are the largest welfare provider in the Armed Forces charity sector, providing financial, social and emotional support, information, advice, advocacy and comradeship to hundreds of thousands of Service personnel, veterans and their dependants every year. In 2014/15, we responded to over 780,000 requests for help – more than ever before.

The Legion offers services to assist Service personnel (including Reservists), veterans and their dependants with claiming disability benefits, managing their finances, accessing military compensation, adapting their homes, and support with accessing employment through mentoring, referrals and our online training and employment resource, CivvyStreet. We offer support for carers and breaks for families, children and those needing support. The Legion

also runs six care homes, provides dementia care and offers immediate needs grants and other forms of help for those in crisis. In conjunction with the MoD and other Service charities, we pledged £50m over ten years to the development and operation of Personnel Recovery Centres and the Battle Back Centre (Lilleshall), as part of the Defence Recovery Capability programme, and we fund pioneering research into the devastating impact of blast injuries.

The Legion works with politicians across the political spectrum to improve the lives of the Armed Forces community. We have been campaigning to further the cause of serving personnel, ex-Service men and women and their families since 1921. Having been the only national organisation to campaign for the Armed Forces Covenant to be enshrined in legislation, the Legion plays a leading role in holding all levels of Government to account on the Armed Forces Covenant commitments.



## AUTHOR

Andy Pike, Public Policy Manager, The Royal British Legion. Published September 2016.

## WITH THANKS

We would like to thank all those both within the Legion and externally who generously lent their time and expertise during the writing of this report, including colleagues from: The Poppy Factory; Royal British Legion Industries; RFEA, The Forces Employment Charity; The Officers Association; Poppyscotland; Forces Diversity; Barclays VETS Programme; the Career Transition Partnership; Nationwide Building Society; Child Soldiers International; and Ethos.

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# FOREWORD

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When Earl Haig founded The Royal British Legion in 1921, he remarked that the population's attitude towards the Servicemen returning from the fronts of the First World War was, "turning war service into a permanent disqualification for civil employment". He could think of "nothing more unjust".

Thankfully, much has changed and improved in the near century since Earl Haig lamented the barriers to employment that veterans faced. Since successfully campaigning for the Armed Forces Covenant to be enshrined in legislation in 2011, the Legion has been pleased to see support for the Armed Forces go from strength to strength. Over 1000 businesses have now signed up to fulfil the pledges of the Covenant and play their part in ensuring that the Armed Forces community face no disadvantage as a result of Service and that those who have given the most are given special consideration. Today the majority of personnel who swap their career in Service for a career in the civilian world go on to find successful and fulfilling employment, valued by businesses throughout the UK and further afield.

Yet the success story for the many is not replicated for all. In 2014 Legion research found that working age veterans were around twice as likely as the general population to be unemployed and those who were employed were less likely

to use their acquired skills in their job. Nothing is more frustrating than hearing of a business who will not take on a veteran because stereotypes and myths have played a part in their recruitment process, or of those leaving Service who are struggling to translate their skills and qualifications into the civilian market. There is no doubt that barriers still exist and, as this report shows, a legacy of Earl Haig's remarks still hold true: the UK still harbours a veterans' employment gap.

This report sets out to look in more detail at what we know about veterans' unemployment, the barriers that veterans still face to securing a fulfilling career outside of Service and the benefits of closing the gap. We put forward a number of recommendations for consideration, and I hope they and the surrounding content inspire the debate and conversation needed to make further progress in this area.

Every veteran's story is different and there is no one-size-fits-all solution to ending unemployment or underemployment in the veteran community for good. But there is more that can be done. This is no one person's or sector's responsibility. The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the Nation to all those who serve and their dependents; it is up to the entire Nation to honour it and work towards closing the veterans' employment gap.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charles Byrne'.

**Charles Byrne**  
Director General, The Royal British Legion

**LIVE ON**



# INTRODUCTION

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As UK unemployment rates reach an eleven year low in 2016, it is vital that those who have served in Her Majesty's Armed Forces are not left behind.<sup>1</sup>

The majority of working age veterans go on to have diverse and successful careers after leaving service. However this is not the case for all UK Service leavers. Research undertaken by the Legion shows that working age veterans in the UK are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed as their civilian contemporaries despite an ever growing marketplace of employment support and opportunities.<sup>2</sup> This report sets out to examine the employment rates of veterans in more detail, the barriers veterans may face in the civilian jobs market and the rationale behind closing the employment gap.

In early 2016 the Legion conducted a review of published reports and studies on veterans' employment. In addition,

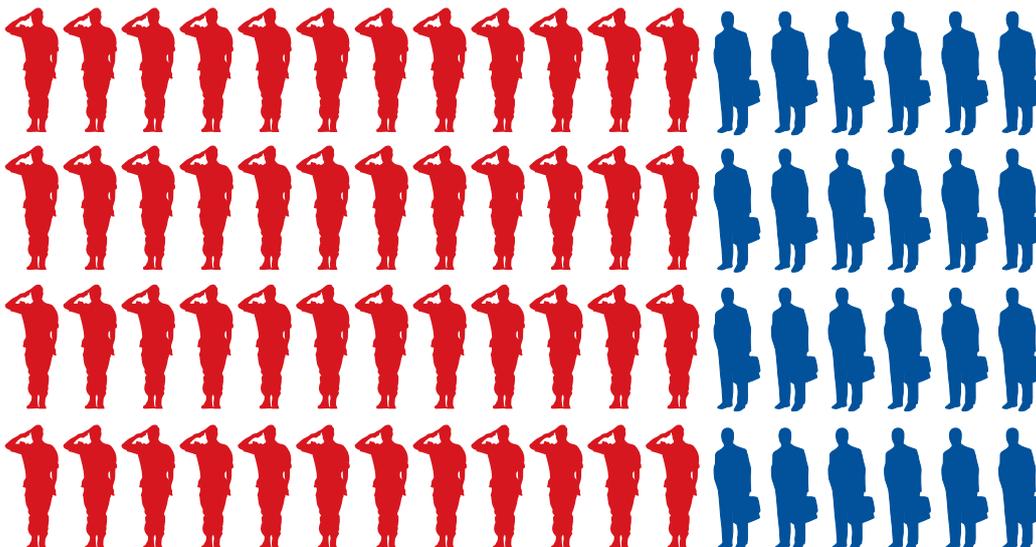
the Legion carried out a series of informal interviews with leading stakeholders in veteran employment from across the charity and private spheres.

Whilst specific groups within the ex-Service community, such as the Wounded Injured and Sick (WIS), partners and spouses of Service personnel, and Early Service Leavers, are worthy of employment reports and further dedicated research in themselves, the purpose of this report is to focus on the veteran community as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

Those working in this field will be familiar with much of the content of this report; however, we hope that by producing this document we can collate the current literature on veteran employment, and provide the catalyst for discussions where innovation and solutions can be found.

## Working age veterans in the UK are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed as their civilian contemporaries<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Office for National Statistics, *UK Labour Market: July 2016*, (2016), p.3

<sup>2</sup> The Royal British Legion, *A UK Household Survey of the ex-Service community*, (2014), p.64

<sup>3</sup> Service leavers who complete less than 4 years' service, or who are compulsorily discharged, are referred to as early service leavers.

# SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Further research should be carried out into:
  - The long term sustainability of employment outcomes for veterans;
  - The employment outcomes and support needs of female veterans; and
  - The employment outcomes and support needs of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic veteran community.

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- The 2021 Census in the UK should include the ability to record ex-Service status in order to definitively capture the employment status of those within the working age veteran community.

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- Armed Forces recruits below the age of 18 should be subject to the same statutory minimum educational standards as they would do in the civilian education sector. This should include:
  - A minimum of 280 guided learning hours per year towards accredited qualifications of an appropriate level;
  - Support to take or retake GCSEs in English and Maths to achieve passes at grade A\*-C; and
  - For those who already hold those qualifications, support to progress to Level 3 qualifications with transferable value to future civilian employment.

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- The Joint Services, the MoD and other Government Departments should strengthen measures to ensure, where possible, every military vocational qualification is aligned with a relevant and current accredited civilian qualification, transferable into the civilian workplace.

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- The MoD should ensure that all Service leavers at the point of transition are undertaking Career Transition Partnership (CTP) resettlement (both transition and training) to maximise their ability to translate their skills to the civilian jobs market. Suggested measures could include:
  - A requirement that all Service leavers, where feasible, should be in possession of a CV suitable for the civilian job market at the point of discharge
  - The MoD should conduct detailed research into the demographics and reasons for any shortfall in uptake of CTP support amongst Service Leavers, with a view to implementing targeted measures to increase participation.

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- The Government should undertake a review of the package of support available to corporate signatories of the Armed Forces Covenant, including a review of the educational support offered and the ability for employers already signed up to the Covenant to share positive experiences of employing veterans.

# BACKGROUND

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Every year since 2010, the UK Armed Forces has been a net exporter of personnel with outflow exceeding the numbers joining.<sup>4</sup> It is estimated that there are now between 900,000 and 1,110,000 working age veterans currently living in the UK.<sup>5,6</sup>

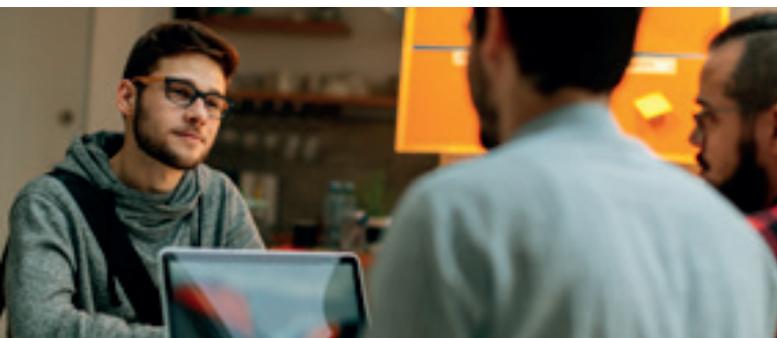
Following the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), the UK's Armed Forces have undergone a strategic shift in manpower. On top of the standard outflow of personnel, by 2015 11,830 personnel were notified that they were selected for redundancy.<sup>7</sup> Although not all of these personnel will re-enter the civilian jobs market, many will do so having spent a considerable proportion of their professional career in Service without any experience of seeking and sustaining employment "outside the wire".

## The national picture: Falling unemployment and increasing support

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Veterans are entering a UK economy and jobs market that is still feeling the effects of the 2008 recession, eight years after the event, and facing an uncertain future. Any effect on the UK's employment market of the decision to leave the European Union will not be clear for some time.<sup>8</sup>

Over the last few years, however, the employment rate in the UK has grown considerably, with 2016 marking the lowest levels of unemployment recorded in a decade at 4.9%.<sup>9</sup>



As the UK unemployment rate has fallen, there are groups who have been left behind and the Government has understandably sought to address some of the employment gaps which have become increasingly clear. The incoming Conservative Government's 2015 manifesto pledged to "halve the disability employment gap" by 2020, a measure which, if delivered, will assist some injured ex-Service personnel.<sup>10</sup>

The last few years have also seen great improvements in the career and employment support being offered to those leaving Service. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Joint Services recognise that successful transition from the Armed Forces to civilian life is crucial. Preparation for future employment is a central pillar of the transition process and the MoD provides support via the Career Transition Partnership (CTP). CTP support assists personnel leaving the Armed Forces to make a successful transition to civilian employment and achieve the wider vocational outcomes they seek. Provision of resettlement starts up to two years before an individual is due to leave the Armed Forces and continues for up to two years post discharge.<sup>11</sup>

## Beyond the state

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Alongside statutory support, there are a wide range of initiatives underway in the UK to support ex-Service personnel into employment both from the charity and private sphere. In 2011 the Government enshrined the Armed Forces Covenant into legislation, pledging that:

- The armed forces community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services; and
- Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.

Businesses, charitable, and public sector organisations are encouraged by the Government to sign the Covenant and demonstrate their support for the Armed Forces community. To date, more than 1,000 organisations have signed the Covenant.<sup>12</sup>

The UK Armed Forces charity sector also provides a range of programmes of support for veterans seeking work or facing barriers to employment. Examples of support from the charity sector are highlighted throughout this report as context.

Yet despite Government, charitable and corporate initiatives thus far, a veterans' employment gap between veterans and the general population persists and leaves veterans vulnerable to the worst effects of any downturn in the UK employment level.

# EMPLOYMENT WITHIN THE VETERAN COMMUNITY

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## A success story for the majority

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Although there are few data sources on which to draw statistics, it is widely accepted that the majority of working age veterans who leave Service go on to have successful and diverse alternative careers. An observer does not need to look far in the UK before finding veterans filling roles throughout the civilian jobs market; in the 2015 Parliament, over 50 members of the House of Commons fall into the category of veteran.

In fact, 85% of UK Service personnel who accessed Career Transition Partnership (CTP) services as they left the Armed Forces in 2014/15 were employed up to 6 months after leaving Service.<sup>13</sup>

## Evidence of a veteran employment gap

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However, despite the success story for the majority, there are a significant number who either end up without full or part time work, or are in employment but not able to fully utilise the skills and education they acquired whilst serving.

The Royal British Legion's Household Survey of the ex-Service community estimated that there are approximately 1,110,000 veterans living in the UK of working age (aged 16-64).<sup>14</sup> Within this number:

- Around 120,000 veterans are unemployed.
- Around 130,000 veterans are not looking for work.
- Around 160,000 veterans have taken early retirement or are in education.

As the vast majority of the UK veteran population are male, the Legion used statistics for working age men from the first quarter of the 2014 Labour Force Survey as a comparator for employment rates, and found that veterans are accordingly:

- Less likely to be in full time work than the general population (57% vs 68%);
- Less likely to be in part time work (6% vs 9%); and
- Nearly twice as likely to be unemployed (11% vs 6%).

In addition, working age veterans are more likely than their civilian counterparts to be excluded from the labour market completely as they are economically inactive (25% vs 17%).<sup>15,16</sup>

The Legion's research is not alone in finding an employment gap between veterans and civilians. Although the Ministry of Defence's own figures, released via the Annual Population Survey, reveal a slightly better picture, evidence of a veterans' employment gap can still be seen. The survey found 75% of working age veterans were in employment compared to 78% of non-veterans. The survey also produced an estimated unemployment rate of 7% amongst veterans compared to 5% for non-veterans.<sup>17</sup> Whilst the MoD's survey does not reveal the stark statistical differences with the general population that the Legion's Household survey found, neither provides a definitive percentage and both highlight a significant cohort who are unemployed.

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<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Defence, *UK Armed Forces Monthly Service Personnel Statistics*, 1 July 2016, (2016), p.6

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Defence, *Annual Population Survey: UK Armed Forces Veterans residing in Great Britain, 2014*, (2016), p.4

<sup>6</sup> The Royal British Legion, (2014), p.7

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Defence, *Monthly Service Personnel Statistics*, (2016), p.6

<sup>8</sup> In the run up to the referendum vote on the UK's membership of the European Union, varying predictions were made on either side of the debate, including both suggestions of increased employment opportunities and of greater unemployment

<sup>9</sup> Office for National Statistics, (2016), p.3

<sup>10</sup> The Conservative Party, *The Conservative Party Manifesto 2015*, (2015), p.19

<sup>11</sup> For more information on the Career Transition Partnership and the support available, please see [www.ctp.org.uk](http://www.ctp.org.uk)

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Defence, *Who has signed the covenant?*, (2016) available at [www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/get-involved/who-has-signed-the-covenant](http://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/get-involved/who-has-signed-the-covenant)

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Defence, *Career Transition Partnership Annual Statistics: UK Regular Service Personnel Employment Outcomes 2010/11 to 2014/15*, (2016), p.1 & 7 – In 2014/15 there were 19,060 Regular Armed Forces Service leavers of whom 12,000 used the Career Transition Partnership. Of the CTP users, 10,220 were employed within 6 months.

<sup>14</sup> The Royal British Legion, (2014), p.7

<sup>15</sup> The Royal British Legion, (2014), p.63-65

<sup>16</sup> Economically inactive is defined as not being in employment or unemployed, this may include those in education, acting as an unpaid carer or long-term sick.

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Defence, *Annual Population Survey*, (2016), p.4

# CIVVY STREET

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## The Royal British Legion

### Overview

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CivvyStreet is the Royal British Legion's online resource for information, advice and guidance and practical support for all those recently leaving, or about to leave, the Forces who are looking for employment opportunities and a chance to redeploy the skills learned while serving.

### Support provided

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- Job board with thousands of jobs for Service leavers from employers who actively seek to recruit ex-Service personnel.
- Access to courses to build skills and qualifications with comprehensive advice on learning options and funding available.
- Online CV builder, job seeking tips and practical and tailored advice on finding employment.
- Links to further advice and support, including one to one appointments with a careers advisor.

### Who is it for?

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CivvyStreet is for anyone who has served in the UK Armed Forces (regular or reserves). It is also for their widows, widowers, partners and dependants. Anyone with an Armed Forces connection can apply to become a registered and approved member of CivvyStreet. Membership is validated against Armed Forces number and branch.

In the first 6 months of 2016 CivvyStreet:

- Advertised on average 220 vacancies each month;
- Received over 50,000 visitors to the site;
- Recorded over 2000 serving personnel and veteran registrations on the site, and
- Answered nearly 650 calls to the careers advice helpline.

### Find out more

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Find out more and register for CivvyStreet at:  
[www.civvystreet.org](http://www.civvystreet.org)



## A more complex picture

The headline employment statistics available indicate further complexity in the employment picture for veterans. Whilst data is sparse, there is evidence to suggest that underemployment is prevalent, leaving veterans unable to utilise their skills and knowledge to their full potential within the employment they have found. Indeed, the Legion's own Household Survey found that an estimated 60,000 members of the ex-Service community reported having to take a job for which they felt overqualified or underpaid. Using the Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2012 Skills and Employment Survey as a comparison, veterans were less likely to say they could use their skills and experience in their current job than British adults aged 20-64.<sup>18</sup>

Younger veterans are particularly less likely to say they are able to use most or all of their acquired skills. It is a worrying indication that those who leave Service at a young age - and in particular Early Service Leavers - are not able to meet their full potential in the civilian world.

It is also worth noting that smaller datasets within the surveys carried out identify specific groups that may face differing employment outcomes and barriers which will require further research:

**Female veterans:** The Annual Population Survey highlighted that although female veterans experience similar levels of employment to the female general population, when compared to their male veteran counterparts female veterans were significantly less likely to be in employment and significantly more likely to be economically inactive. Furthermore, although data from the United States is not directly comparable due to the differing economies and support provisions, it is notable that data from the US supports the contention that female veterans have worse employment outcomes than their male counterparts.<sup>19</sup>

**Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME):** In Career Transition Partnership data released by the Ministry of Defence on UK Regular Service personnel employment outcomes, black, Asian and minority ethnic Service leavers had a significantly lower estimated employment rate than white Service leavers (68% vs 87% in 2013/14).<sup>20</sup> Within the BAME community there are likely to be further differences in outcomes and need profiles between cultural backgrounds, however this data is currently unavailable.

**Disabled veterans and the Wounded, Injured and Sick (WIS):** In 2015/16, a total of 2,332 Regular Service Personnel were medically discharged from the UK Armed Forces.<sup>21</sup> The Legion's Household survey further found that working age veterans were nearly twice as likely to report a long term illness than the general population (24% vs 13%) and within unemployed veterans, the numbers reporting a long term health condition rose to 52%.<sup>22</sup> At the end of 2015 the employment rate for disabled people in the UK stood at 46.7%, which was 33.6% lower than for the general population.<sup>23</sup> There is, therefore, considerable concern that veterans with health conditions, which may or may not be related to their Service, face significant and complex barriers to employment.

**Early Service Leavers (ESLs):** As support for ESLs was until recently provided outside of the Career Transition Partnership, there is not the same data available on employment outcomes. Yet this cohort face some of the greatest barriers on re-entering civilian life. Research has previously shown that only 52% of ESLs reported to be in education, training or employment six months after leaving.<sup>24</sup> The Legion's Household Survey also reports that veterans who served for less than 3 years are less likely to be in full time work than the average for veterans.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>18</sup> The Royal British Legion, (2014), p.68

<sup>19</sup> Women's Bureau, US Department of Labour, *Women Veterans Profile*, (2014)

<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Defence, *Career Transition Partnership Annual Statistics*, (2016), p.18

<sup>21</sup> Ministry of Defence, *Annual Medical Discharges in the UK Regular Armed Forces, 1 April 2011 – 31 March 2016*, (2016)

<sup>22</sup> The Royal British Legion, (2014), p.viii

<sup>23</sup> Analysis by Scope of the *Labour Market Figures for October to December 2015* released by the Office for National Statistics found at [www.scope.org.uk/About-Us/Media/Press-releases/February-2016/Labour-Market-Stats-show-more-disabled-people-are](http://www.scope.org.uk/About-Us/Media/Press-releases/February-2016/Labour-Market-Stats-show-more-disabled-people-are)

<sup>24</sup> Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC, *The Veterans Transition Review*, (2014) p.55

<sup>25</sup> The Royal British Legion, (2014), p.64

## A need for more data

Although it is unmistakable that a veterans' employment gap exists, the scale of the challenge is unclear. The estimated employment rates for veterans outline a complex picture, and one that is not fully quantified. By their nature, the sample based surveys available provide an estimated headline picture of the employment status of the veteran community at any one point in time. They are unable to provide data on whether the employment gained is sustainable or fulfilling for the veteran concerned.

Similarly, whilst CTP statistics provide a reflection of the scheme's success, the support extends just two years after leaving Service; not long enough to accurately gauge whether the employment found is the most suitable for the veteran. Furthermore, the CTP is not mandatory and of the 19,060 Armed Forces Service leavers in 2014/15, under two thirds (62%) left Service having used the full range of CTP services with the remaining third lost from the statistics.<sup>26</sup>

Lastly, and as outlined already, more research is needed into the employment outcomes of specific subsets of the veteran population where there is indication of statistical differences.



### Recommendation

Further research should be carried out into: the long term sustainability of employment outcomes for veterans; the employment outcomes and support needs of female veterans; and employment outcomes and support needs of the BAME veteran community.

### Recommendation

The 2021 Census in the UK should include the ability to record ex-Service status in order to definitively capture the employment status of those within the working age veteran community.

<sup>26</sup> Ministry of Defence, *Career Transition Partnership Annual Statistics*, (2016), p.44

# EMPLOY-ABLE

## Poppyscotland

### Overview

Employ-Able is available throughout Scotland and is aimed at veterans who are having difficulty adjusting to civilian life because of mental health conditions and need help to find or sustain employment. The programme offers one-to-one and group support to develop a tailored pathway to employment using Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) Employment Advisors.

### Support provided

- One to one support to identify needs, set goals, overcome barriers and engage with mainstream services or enter into group activities, followed by additional support as needed.
- Access to SAMH "Tools for Living" programme - "Tools for Living" consists of 21 modules and provides structured support in a time-limited manner with specific objectives and outcomes delivered over a number of weeks.
- Assistance in developing self-awareness, social skills, skill development and coping strategies.
- Signposting and support for individuals with effective support networks, ideas about what they want to do and the direction they wish to take into a pre-work option or directly into employment.

### Who is it for?

Employ-Able is specifically aimed at veterans who are having difficulty adjusting to civilian life because of mental health conditions and who need help to find or sustain employment. It is open to veterans who are engaged in the ongoing DWP employment programmes and to veterans who do not have a defined health barrier to accessing work but nonetheless require support.

In 2014/15:

- There were 108 referrals to Employ-Able.
- 81% of clients moved towards vocational goals (moved into work, training and education, volunteering and secured interviews).

### Find out more

Find out more at: [www.poppyscotland.org.uk/get-help/employment/employ-able](http://www.poppyscotland.org.uk/get-help/employment/employ-able)



# BARRIERS FACED BY EX-SERVICE PERSONNEL

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There are a number of barriers to employment that veterans face in the civilian world. These barriers are not exclusive to those with a career in the military, nor are they an inescapable consequence. Yet through discussions with stakeholders from across the sector and a review of published studies, a number of common themes emerge.

There are groups within the veteran population who may to a greater or lesser extent be affected by any number of these barriers, but we have chosen to focus on themes that are universal and can be applied across the spectrum of Service leavers.

Overcoming barriers is no one person or sector's responsibility. It is clear that the MoD, external organisations, the Services and personnel themselves must each play their part if the veteran employment gap is to be reduced.

## Education and qualifications

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Those who join the UK Armed Forces at a young age, often as an alternative to pursuing higher education or gaining civilian employment experience, are reliant on the training and skills provided through the Services to be able to enter the civilian job market once they leave. Although not unique to a single branch of Service, this is most pronounced within the Army.

As the Army tends to recruit for the infantry from more deprived areas of the country, appropriate education and support to obtain qualifications that are recognised outside of the Armed Forces is vital. Up to 50% of Army recruits have literacy and numeracy skills below Entry Level 3, equivalent to the standard expected of primary school leavers at age 11.<sup>27</sup> In February 2015, of the intake into Army Foundation College Harrogate, 74% were initially assessed as having literacy skills at Entry Level 3 or below

and 65% were assessed as having numeracy skills at Entry Level 3 or below.<sup>28</sup>

Low literacy and numeracy skills can constitute a serious barrier to employment post Service. The Department for Education commissioned 2011 *Wolf Report on Vocational Education* places significant emphasis on the need for these skills, stating "English and Maths GCSE (at grades A\*-C) are fundamental to young people's employment and education prospects."<sup>29</sup>

Those in Service are able to study to obtain GCSE and A-Level qualifications, or their equivalents. Indeed, resources are put into encouraging learning to take place. Yet how many do so is unclear and the commitments of Service life can make this difficult to undertake in practice. Unlike their civilian counterparts, Armed Forces trainees are exempt from having to complete 280 guided learning hours towards accredited qualifications, the minimum standard that now defines the statutory "duty to participate" in education up to the age of 18. This gives civilians a distinct advantage in the civilian jobs market over those leaving the Armed Forces. Even within civilian 16 year olds who are classified as the most disadvantaged and eligible for free school meals, around 85% now continue in sustained education and are subject to Wolf's recommendations on the minimum standards of education.<sup>30</sup> Whereas, "the army's target for recruits' attainment after up to 12 months is Entry Level 3, equivalent to a reading age of 9-11. After three years soldiers are expected to have reached the next level... but the army does not record what proportion do so in practice."<sup>31</sup>

Evidence of lower educational attainment can be found in both the Legion's Household Survey and the MoD's Annual Population Survey results. The Household survey found that civilians were over twice as likely to hold a degree level qualification as veterans (26% vs 12%).<sup>32</sup> The Annual Population Survey similarly put the percentages of civilians and veterans who hold a degree level qualification at 27.5% and 18.5% respectively.<sup>33</sup>



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Whilst providing an advantage, academic qualifications are of course not the only route into securing employment in the civilian world. The UK Armed Forces provide a learning environment with a wide range of qualifications available that not only enhance a military career but civilian employers should find desirable in potential employees. Lord Ashcroft urged that personnel are encouraged to, “take ownership of their future from day one...prompting individuals to think about their career development within the Forces, and their longer-term aims.”<sup>34</sup> Yet despite this, a major recurring theme in the literature published on veteran employment and in anecdotal feedback is that if career development within the Armed Forces is to effectively feed into post-Service aims, the two need to be better integrated through constant review of the alignment between military and civilian qualifications.

In 2013 the comprehensive mapping study of transition carried out by The Forces in Mind Trust drew on findings that, “some ex-Service personnel find that despite having Service related qualifications, these are often invalid in the civilian employment market or are not recognised outside the Service.”<sup>35</sup> This statement is echoed elsewhere, including in Lord Ashcroft’s 2014 *Veterans’ Transition Review*

recommendation that the Government should, “reinforce the strategy for translating and accrediting skills, experience and qualifications gained in the Forces for the civilian world.”<sup>36</sup> Even more recently, The Poppy Factory and the Centre for Mental Health’s 2016 report *Employment in mind* quotes a similar sentiment from a client:

*“There’s certain things you don’t have a qualification for. For instance being in charge of between 200 and 600 men as an HR office manager. I don’t have a qualification, so I’d go to a company and say, ‘well I’ve just been in charge of 600 men, I’ve been in charge of pay documentation, passports, deployments, bombs, bullets, you name it’...It didn’t mean a thing because I don’t have qualifications”*<sup>37</sup>

The combination of lower formal educational qualifications and vocational training that does not systematically extend relevant accreditation beyond the military is likely to contribute to veterans failing to find fulfilling vocations where they can utilise their knowledge and skills.

## Recommendation

Armed Forces recruits below the age of 18 should be subject to the same statutory minimum educational standards as they would be in the civilian education sector.

**This should include:** A minimum of 280 guided learning hours per year towards accredited qualifications of an appropriate level; support to take or retake GCSEs in English and Maths to achieve passes at grade A\*-C; and for those who already hold those qualifications, support to progress to Level 3 qualifications with transferable value to future civilian employment.

## Recommendation

The Joint Services, the MoD and other Government Departments should strengthen measures to ensure, where possible, every military vocational qualification is aligned with a relevant and current accredited civilian qualification, transferable into the civilian workplace.

<sup>27</sup> Vorhaus, J. et al, *Armed Forces Basic Skill Longitudinal Study*, (2012), p.11

<sup>28</sup> Freedom of Information request results obtained by Child Soldiers International from the Ministry of Defence, 2015

<sup>29</sup> Wolf, A., *Review of Vocational Education - The Wolf Report*, London: Department for Education, (2011), p.8

<sup>30</sup> Department For Education, *Destinations of key stage 4 and key stage 5 students in state-funded and independent institutions*, England, 2013/14, (2016), p. 6

<sup>31</sup> Child Soldiers International, *The British Armed Forces, why raising the recruitment age would benefit everyone*, *Parliamentary briefing*, (2016)

<sup>32</sup> The Royal British Legion, (2014), p.66

<sup>33</sup> Ministry of Defence, *Annual Population Survey*, (2016), p.20

<sup>34</sup> Ashcroft, (2014), p.45

<sup>35</sup> Forces in Mind Trust, *The Transition Mapping Study*, (2013) p.44

<sup>36</sup> Ashcroft, (2014), p.19

<sup>37</sup> Centre for Mental Health, *Employment in mind, The Poppy Factory employability service and veterans with mental health conditions*, (2016), p.10

# THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION MENTORING PROGRAMME

The Royal British Legion, Help for Heroes, SSAFA



## Overview

The Royal British Legion's online mentoring programme offers a new and easy way for Service leavers and veterans to connect with mentors in the property, construction and transport and logistics industries for career planning and networking support, regardless of location.

SSAFA and Help for Heroes have recently signed up to join the online platform with their own mentoring schemes.

## Support provided

- A web based platform to match mentors and mentees.
- Mentees select mentors from those best matched to their profile and requirements.
- Encouragement and facilitation to maximise the relationship and maintain regular contact with a mentor over an agreed period.
- Mentor availability via email, phone, Skype, social media, face-to-face communications and a bespoke mobile app.

## Who is it for?

Service leavers and veterans looking for careers advice, networking or mentoring contacts in the property, construction, transport and logistics areas.

## Find out more

Join the programme by emailing us at [mentoring@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:mentoring@britishlegion.org.uk).

We will then send you a passcode and a simple step-by-step guide to getting started.

Registration for the programme needs to be completed on a personal computer, laptop or tablet. Once registered, you'll also have the option to use our mobile friendly app that enables mentors and mentees to make contact while on the move.

## Job seeking in civvy street

Leaving Service for many involves replacing the structured hierarchy and culture of Service life for a seemingly chaotic and unstructured civilian jobs market. Within a civilian setting, abilities such as expectation management, CV writing, translating acquired skills and interview technique are key to standing out in any field of applicants. Service leavers may have never undergone a civilian job application process prior to transition out of the Armed Forces, and as such lack experience in the skills required.

Support is not in short supply. For those that take it up, the CTP provides advice and support to aid Service leavers in their transition, setting out to equip them with the job seeking skills they need to successfully secure employment. For Service leavers who do not use the CTP programme, there is a wide range of external providers available offering CV writing workshops, interview techniques and access to careers advisors; typing “civilian CV tips” into a search engine returns a wealth of services offering to assist veterans with job seeking techniques, both from not-for-profit and fee based services.

Yet despite the available support, stakeholders and employers frequently highlight poor applications and CVs as a barrier to employment. Lord Ashcroft found that, “employers reported a common set of problems that exist despite the considerable effort that goes into preparing Service Leavers for transition. These included... poor CVs that do not do justice to the Service Leaver.”<sup>38</sup> Qualitative interviews with employers carried out by Futures 4 Forces similarly found that employers, “admitted to being confused by military jargon that sometimes litters Service leavers’ CVs and to finding it difficult to match ex-military personnel’s skill sets to their company’s specific skill requirements.”<sup>39</sup>

Poor applications are unlikely to be solely due to a lack of confidence in the skills required for a vacancy; the vast majority of veterans report high levels of confidence in work related skills.<sup>40</sup> Therefore it is not unreasonable to assume, as has been highlighted by many before, that the barrier arises in confidence to *translate* those acquired skills in Service into an effective job application. Service culture can result in veterans overly relying on Service terminology and an expectation that civilian employers will have an understanding of the military, which could alienate them from potential employers. In discussions with stakeholders for this report, multiple instances were recalled of suitable candidates for jobs losing out in shortlisting due to a failure to single out or recognise transferable skills inherent in their military career.

Furthermore, applications can be hampered by unrealistic expectations of the civilian jobs market. It is worth highlighting that for veterans of all ranks, but notably for those leaving Service at a senior level, false expectations of employment and salary can prove an equally damaging barrier to securing fulfilling employment. Futures 4 Forces noted that employers judged that high-ranking Service leavers had “unrealistic salary expectations”, hampering smooth transition into civilian employment.<sup>41</sup> Many Service personnel leave the Armed Forces with an expectation that they will be able to command a similar salary in the civilian world as they did in Service. *The Transition Mapping Study* noted that, “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 expect to work at, and a realistic idea of likely salary range.”<sup>42</sup> It is a sentiment that three years later is still worthy of repetition.

### Recommendation:

The MoD should ensure that all Service leavers at the point of transition are undertaking CTP resettlement (both transition and training) to maximise their ability to translate their skills to the civilian jobs market. Suggested measures could include:

A requirement that all Service leavers should, where feasible, be in possession of a CV suitable for the civilian job market at the point of discharge.

The MoD should conduct detailed research into the demographics and reasons for any shortfall in uptake of CTP support amongst Service Leavers, with a view to implementing targeted measures to increase participation.

<sup>38</sup> Ashcroft, (2014), p.68

<sup>39</sup> Futures 4 Forces, *UK employers' perceptions on the employment and employability of ex-Service personnel*, (2015), p.32

<sup>40</sup> The Royal British Legion, (2014), p.68

<sup>41</sup> Futures 4 Forces (2015), p.22

<sup>42</sup> Forces in Mind Trust, (2013) p.40

## Employers' perceptions and stereotyping

Every year since its inception, an increasing number of organisations have signed the Armed Forces Covenant, showing the depth of support amongst businesses for the UK's Armed Forces community. With over 1,000 businesses signed up from a diverse range of sizes and sectors, it is all the more surprising that one of the most frequently quoted barriers for veterans is the perception that employers subscribe to a negative stereotype of veteran job seekers.

In support of their Transition Employment and Resettlement Programme, Barclays ran a survey of veterans in the civilian workplace which found, "a quarter (25%) of veterans felt that an interviewer had preconceptions about them because of their time in the armed forces." Even more worryingly, the survey further found that "one in six (15%) veterans [had] been asked an inappropriate or invasive question when interviewing

for a civilian job, one of the most common being whether they had killed anyone during combat."<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, the 2015 Futures 4 Forces report for Forces in Mind Trust, *UK employers' perceptions on the employment and employability of ex-Service personnel*, identified similar preconceptions in a series of qualitative interviews with employers. One respondent to the research is quoted as saying, "We need to keep our staff happy and the last thing they need is someone from outside who comes in and barks orders".<sup>44</sup> Anecdotally, the Legion has heard of other instances where similar attitudes were present in potential employers.

As one client of The Poppy Factory reported as part of the *Employment in mind* report, the negative stereotyping of ex-Servicemen and women can be acutely felt by veteran job seekers: "Stereotypes of being, you know, the Vietnam Vet in the corner. Can't do anything because every time I'm angry I might explode and grab a gun and shoot people".<sup>45</sup>



The Legion sought to address the “Mad, bad and sad” stereotype of the ex-Service community in the Household Survey 2014, acknowledging and countering a misguided public perception that veterans suffer from high levels of mental health problems or that many veterans end up on the street, sleep rough or are suicidal. The Household Survey reflected that, “these myths are pernicious because they may harm the employment prospects of military personnel when they seek work in the civilian world”.<sup>46</sup> Lord Ashcroft’s *Veterans’ Transition Review* went further and included the recommendation that the Government should, “be more proactive in countering negative misconceptions and stereotypes which can create an extra barrier to Service Leavers finding work.”<sup>47</sup>

Despite these and others’ attempts at addressing the negative stereotyping of veterans in the public sphere, there is little doubt that preconceptions continue to pervade employers’ conscious and subconscious recruitment practices.

The commitments outlined in the Armed Forces Covenant are beneficial to helping businesses show support for the Armed Forces community, yet by themselves are not enough and may even have a negative effect on perceptions of veterans. Perhaps a clue as to why the Covenant in its present form is unable to offset negative

perceptions can be found in the finding of the Futures 4 Forces employers’ perceptions report that, “[firms] wouldn’t recruit ex-Service personnel for corporate responsibility reasons alone”.<sup>48</sup> It is a sentiment echoed in *Back to Civvy Street*, a consultation report from the College of St George which noted that, “the armed forces covenant could unhelpfully be construed as a tool ‘to persuade employers that it is their duty to employ ex-Service personnel’ as though a corporate social responsibility in return for such individuals having put their lives at risk to protect the country.”<sup>49</sup> If the corporate pledges of the Armed Forces Covenant are to fulfil the aim of ensuring that businesses support the Armed Forces community in the UK, it must do more to ensure that it does not perpetuate the stereotype of the veteran as the victim.

It is vital that all sectors of society do all that they can to ensure veterans are not seen as a liability, or ‘damaged goods’ in need of charity by potential employers. The Government, and all sectors of society, should revisit the Ashcroft recommendation to counter misconceptions and stereotypes. One potential avenue is a review of guidance and support offered to corporate signatories of the Armed Forces Covenant, enhancing the initiative’s educational remit and the ability for employers already signed up to the Covenant to share positive experiences of employing veterans.

## Recommendation

The Government should undertake a review of the package of support available to corporate signatories of the Armed Forces Covenant, including a review of the educational support offered and the ability for employers already signed up to the Covenant to share positive experiences of employing veterans.

<sup>43</sup> Barclays Armed Forces Transition Employment and Resettlement Programme, Press release: “Have you ever killed anyone?” 1 in 6 veterans asked an inappropriate interview question by civilian employers, (2016)

<sup>44</sup> Futures 4 Forces (2015), p.20

<sup>45</sup> Centre for Mental Health and The Poppy Factory, *Employment in mind, The Poppy Factory employability service and veterans with mental health conditions*, (2016), p.12

<sup>46</sup> The Royal British Legion, (2014), p.v

<sup>47</sup> Ashcroft, (2014), p.20

<sup>48</sup> Futures 4 Forces (2015), p.19

<sup>49</sup> College of St George, *Back to Civvy Street: How can we better support individuals to lead successful civilian lives after a career in the UK Armed Forces?*, (2014), p.10

# GETTING YOU BACK TO WORK

## The Poppy Factory

### Overview

The Poppy Factory's evidence based Individual Placement & Support (IPS) employability service provides client-centred assistance to veterans in England and Wales who face barriers to sustainable employment due to a health condition or disability. The service is delivered through one to one case management and built on enabling principles. Employability Consultants work with veterans in the community, including, where appropriate, their place of work.

### Support provided

- Support with understanding skills and experience to improve confidence, recognise transferable skills and their value in relation to civilian jobs.
- CV development and refinement, guidance on job search skills and applications, interview coaching and practice.
- Action planning and regular review of progress to maintain momentum.
- Individualised job search and steps taken to match with and introduce to suitable employers, plus access to vacancies advertised on The Poppy Factory's Jobs Portal.
- Guidance on handling disclosure of information, for example in relation to health/disability matters or a criminal record.
- Exploration of training, development and qualification needs; including support with funding grant applications or arrangement of a work placement.
- With consent, liaison with a veteran's key health professional(s) or support worker, to ensure relevant information is considered when making decisions about work.
- Support following a job offer, including identifying reasonable adjustments.
- Personal learning and development plan with the client and employer (where agreed) to help with the transition into work and job sustainability.
- 1 year of In Work Support.
- Optional mentoring through a corporate mentoring scheme.



### Who is it for?

To be eligible for support, veterans need proof of Service, evidence of a health barrier to employment and no longer be supported by the Career Transition Partnership as part of their resettlement. Veterans already in employment can access the service if it's perceived that a health condition is contributing to challenges in the current job or hindering finding a new role.

At any one time, the Poppy Factory's Getting You Back to Work service is supporting between 380 and 400 individuals. New registrations are expected to reach at least 600 in the 2016/17 financial year. Since 2010 the service has facilitated 630 veterans into paid employment and achieved positive outcomes for a further 70, including entry to education or volunteering roles.

74% of veterans achieving paid employment have been sustained in work for at least 12 months.

### Find out more

Find out more about The Poppy Factory employment support at: [www.poppyfactory.org](http://www.poppyfactory.org)

# LIFEWORKS PROGRAMME

Royal British Legion Industries



## Overview

LifeWorks is a fully funded 5 day course which equips ex-Armed Forces personnel with the tools to find and maintain a civilian job that is appropriate for them. It focuses on coaching and support is tailored to each individual to maximise their potential.

## Support provided

- 5 day intensive course.
- A comprehensive vocational assessment of a participant's background, skills and ambitions.
- Coaching 4 Change –helping a participant to achieve positive outcomes, understand how to develop and increase self-belief, how to manage unhelpful thinking and how to overcome the limiting beliefs and obstacles that could stop them from working.
- CV and job-searching coaching and workshops.
- Interview preparation ending with a full 'mock' interview with external employers.
- 12 month follow up.

## Who is it for?

LifeWorks is available to anyone who has been in the Armed Forces, regardless of when and how long they served for.

LifeWorks courses are run for up to 12 delegates at a time. In 2015, 185 participants attended a LifeWorks course, of which 83% were in employment or vocational training 12 months after.

## Find out more

Find out more at:  
[www.rbli.co.uk/employment\\_solutions/lifeworks](http://www.rbli.co.uk/employment_solutions/lifeworks)

# THE BENEFITS OF REDUCING THE VETERAN EMPLOYMENT GAP

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It may seem a straightforward assertion that reducing unemployment for any group is beneficial both for the individuals concerned and society in general.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, reducing the veteran employment gap holds great benefits worth highlighting, to the UK, individual businesses and to the veterans themselves.

## The benefit to the economy

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A few of the qualities that veterans can bring to a business can be found in research from the US. As quoted by The Poppy Factory and the Centre for Mental Health's *Employment in mind* report, Curry Hall et al's analysis of the 100,000 jobs mission in the US found that employers cite the following benefits from employing veterans:

- Veterans have experience working in and leading teams.
- They are flexible and able to work in a stressful, fast-paced, dynamic environment.
- They are dependable, demonstrate a strong work ethic, and have the tenacity to consistently complete the work.
- Veterans display integrity and loyalty.
- Veterans are experienced with culturally diverse and global working environments.<sup>51</sup>

Beyond the headline qualities though lies a more pressing and strategic need for businesses to employ people with a Service background. The UK unemployment rate has fallen significantly since 2010, yet the unemployment figure hides a growing number of skill shortage vacancies as evidenced in the UK Commission for Employment and Skills 2015 employer skills survey:

*"Within this buoyant labour market, skill-shortage vacancies [present] a growing challenge for employers in filling their vacancies. Six percent of all employers had at least one skill shortage vacancy – a significant increase from the four percent of employers that reported having such vacancies in 2013. In volume terms, there were 209,500 reported skill-shortage vacancies which was an increase of 43 percent from the 146,000 reported in 2013."*<sup>52</sup>

Skill shortages are a cost to the UK in productivity and to individual employers financially. The employer skills survey reports that, "over two-thirds of employers that had difficulty filling their vacancies solely as a result of skill shortages had experienced a direct financial impact through either loss of business to competitors, or increased operating costs."<sup>53</sup> Yet veterans who leave Service are highly trained and experienced in a range of skills that could be utilised to help meet the current skill shortages.

There is an overlap between the areas of highest skill shortages and the training programme and roles within the Armed Forces, including, "chefs (17 percent of all Skilled Trades skill-shortage vacancies), Metal Working Production and Maintenance Fitters (13 percent) and Vehicle Technicians, Mechanics and Electricians (13 percent)."<sup>54</sup> As Business in the Community point out, "with over 200 trades in the Army alone, armed forces personnel receive advance training in a number of technical roles, including engineering, project management, communications, logistics and IT – all transferable to the civilian workplace."<sup>55</sup>

There is a net gain to all involved if more is done to connect up veterans with roles where their skills can be appreciated and rewarded. However, to achieve this, it is vital that the skills learned in Service and any vocational qualifications gained are transferable into the civilian jobs marketplace, barriers that are discussed further elsewhere in this report.

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<sup>50</sup> As an illustration of the benefit in investment in veteran employment, The Poppy Factory estimated in 2014 that there was a Social Return on Investment of £2.23 for every £1 spent on their *Getting you back to Work* scheme (The Poppy Factory, 2014).

<sup>51</sup> Curry Hall, K. et al. *Veteran Employment: Lessons from the 100 000 Jobs Mission*, (2014)

<sup>52</sup> UK Commission for Employment and Skills, *Employer Skills Survey 2015: UK Results*, (2016), p.12

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p.13

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p.39

<sup>55</sup> Business in the Community, *The business case for adopting armed forces-friendly recruitment practices*, (2016), available at: <http://www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/military-recruitment/business-case>



## The benefit to the veteran

Reducing veteran unemployment is not just beneficial for the UK economy, but for the veterans themselves. The link between being in work and good health is well documented, as is the converse link between unemployment and poor mental and physical health. The Department of Work and Pensions commissioned 2006 report *Is work good for your health and wellbeing?*<sup>56</sup> sets out this relationship clearly:

“There is a strong association between worklessness and poor health. This may be partly a health selection effect, but it is also to a large extent cause and effect. There is strong evidence that unemployment is generally harmful to health, including:

- Higher mortality;
- Poorer general health, long-standing illness, limiting longstanding illness;
- Poorer mental health, psychological distress, minor psychological/psychiatric morbidity;
- Higher medical consultation, medication consumption and hospital admission rates.”<sup>56</sup>

For veterans, a smooth transition from a career in the Armed Forces into a career in civvy street can bring with it further benefits. *The Transition Mapping Study* carried out by Forces in Mind Trust, sought to estimate the cost of poor transition out of the UK Armed Forces for all ages:

*“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.”<sup>57</sup>*

The financial cost of poor transition is substantial, and underlies an equally substantial personal cost to Service leavers who can be pushed further from the civilian jobs market and long term stable employment. Equally, successful transition into appropriate and fulfilling civilian employment provides stability, confidence and financial foundation, thereby softening much of the cultural shock re-entering civvy street can bring.

<sup>56</sup> Burton, A. K. & Waddell, *Is Work Good for your Health and Wellbeing*, (2006), p.viii

<sup>57</sup> Futures 4 Forces (2015), p.20

# FOUNDATION PROPERTY MAINTENANCE COURSE

Building Heroes Education Foundation

## Overview

Building Heroes provides skills training to military veterans and support into employment in the building trades. The intensive 5 week residential Foundation Property Maintenance Course is a multi-disciplinary programme which covers a range of property maintenance skills including repairing/maintaining walls and internal/external fixtures and fittings, plumbing, tiling, and painting and decorating.

## Support provided

- An intensive 5 week residential foundation course.
- Training in health and safety and welfare in construction, sustainability in the construction industry, repairing and maintaining masonry structures, maintaining and repairing internal and external fixtures and fittings, painting and decorating, and domestic plumbing.
- An introduction to self-employment.
- Building a personal career portfolio.
- Employability skills training, such as CV writing and interview techniques.

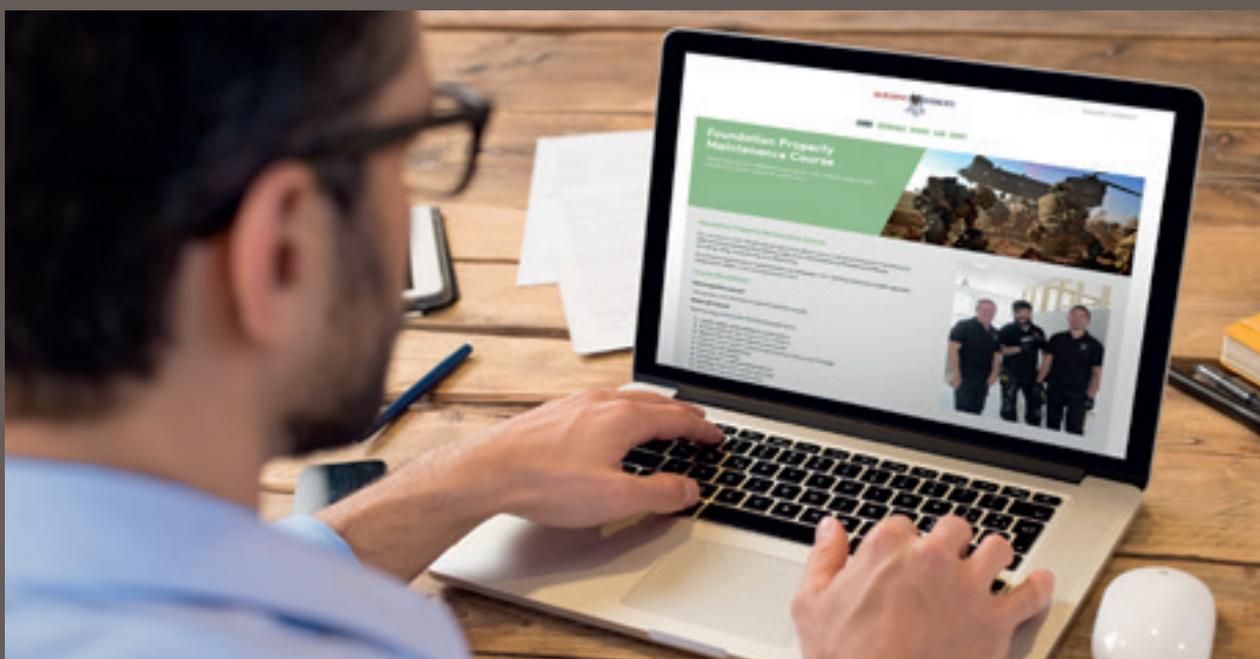
- Level 1 Health and Safety in the Construction Environment and a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (card).
- Preparation for a Level 2 or 3 qualification in multi-trades or a single discipline.
- Support into a career in the building trades with guidance and advice appropriate to needs.

## Who is it for?

The Building Heroes Foundation Property Maintenance Course is open to all ex-Service personnel looking to start a career in the building trade and is open to 80 beneficiaries each year.

## Find out more

Find out more at: [www.buildingheroes.org.uk](http://www.buildingheroes.org.uk)



# EX-FORCES EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME

RFEA – The Forces Employment Charity



## Overview

RFEA's Ex-Forces Employment Programme supports those who have served in the armed forces to find employment for the rest of their working lives.

We are able to continue support that is initially provided at the end of service as part of the MoD funded Career Transition Partnership (CTP). RFEA's programme provides support, regardless of background or length of time served in the Armed Forces.

RFEA's Regional Employment Advisors work closely with Job Centre Plus Armed Forces Champions, other service providers and charities.

## Support provided

- One to one employment advice and guidance.
- In depth understanding of local jobs markets.
- Understanding of challenges and opportunities faced by ex-Forces personnel seeking employment.
- Referrals to other support organisations as needed.

- Access to, and support using, online career planning and employability tools including CV builder and interview skills practice.
- Individual job matching to suitable opportunities by skill and location.

## Who is it for?

Anyone in the UK who has served at least one day in any of the three British Armed Services can use RFEA's job-finding services.

RFEA has:

- 10,000 job opportunities.
- Created via relationships with 7,000 employers.
- Supporting over 20,000 every year through all its programmes.

## Find out more

Find out more and register at:  
[www.rfea.org.uk/jobseekers](http://www.rfea.org.uk/jobseekers)

# EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FROM THE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

## Officers' Association (OA)

### Overview

The OA Employment Department supports former officers to gain sustainable civilian employment. It is unique in offering tailored advice and targeted services to those seeking to enter the executive jobs market with a greater emphasis on networking and effective personal branding.

### Support provided

- Building knowledge about transition skills, sectors, industries and roles (OA Insight) through webinars, workshops and symposiums.
- Growing connections and networks (OA Connect) through networking events, the OA's LinkedIn community and network of veterans established in a wide range of civilian roles across different sectors that are able to offer advice and guidance.
- Bringing roles and other opportunities from employers who value the benefits former officers bring to their organisations (OA Appointment). Roles are published on the OA's executive jobs board with a weekly newsletter to highlight specific opportunities.
- 1:1 consultations with career consultants who have experience of both the Service and commercial world. These offer tailored support including help with CVs and job applications.

The OA also has an active employer engagement and leadership strategy which enables employers to network and share best practice and promotes the business case for employing Service leavers with a particular focus on the benefits and value they bring to an organisation.

### Who is it for?

The Officers Association's employment support is open to all serving and former officers of the UK Armed Forces, whether in paid employment or not. The majority of clients are in transition, but the OA also works with those who are considering leaving the Services and those who have already retired and are looking to change roles or careers in later life.

In the first 9 months of FY 2015/2016, across all of its employment services the OA offered support to 3,930 officers (including 1,219 new registrants). This included:

- 45,000 visits to the Executive jobs board with an average of 75 new jobs posted per month.
- 11,000 views of live and archived webinars.
- 1,050 job seekers attended workshops, networking events and symposiums.
- 561 1:1 career consultations carried out.

### Find out more

For more information on the events and support offered by the Officers Association for former officer job seekers, visit: [www.officersassociation.org.uk/employment](http://www.officersassociation.org.uk/employment)



# CONCLUSION

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The majority of Service Leavers of working age successfully transition into civilian life and may never face a barrier to securing employment outside of the Armed Forces. However, it is clear that this is not the case for all, and a veterans' employment gap exists in the UK.

The last few years have seen great improvements in the transitional support provided to those leaving the Armed Forces by all sectors of society. It would be fair to surmise that both personnel approaching the end of their Service career and veteran job seekers have more sources of advice and support available to them than ever before, yet despite these improvements and advances, there is still more to be done:

- More accurate data is needed on the long term sustainability of jobs, underemployment in the jobs market and analysis of some smaller subsets of the veterans population;
- More can be done to bolster existing initiatives such as the corporate pledges to the Armed Forces Covenant;
- More can be put in place to ensure that the education, training, skills and qualifications gained in Service are translated into the civilian world.

There is no one sector of society whose responsibility it is to improve the job prospects of those who have served. The Armed Forces Covenant sets out the nation's commitment to all of the Armed Forces community and whilst a veterans' employment gap still exists, that commitment is yet to be fully met.

The recommendations in this report do not represent a panacea, and many of the recommendations have been suggested before by ourselves and others. However they provide a foundation of improvements on which to build. As the skills gap increases in the UK, and the economy faces an uncertain future, it is vital that the skills and abilities of veteran job seekers are utilised to the benefit of the individuals, their families and UK economy as a whole.



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