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Senior Non-Commissioned Officers and Employment after leaving the UK Armed Forces

A report prepared for
Forces in Mind Trust

By

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Preface by Ray Lock, Chief Executive of Forces in Mind Trust



For the many employers who have never experienced life within the Armed Forces, the role of the Senior Non-Commissioned Officer can appear a mystery. Or worse, a stereotypical mixture of *Soldier Soldier* and *Carry on up the Khyber*. We commissioned this research because there was plenty of anecdotal evidence to suggest that SNCOs had worse employment outcomes than others. At Forces in Mind Trust, we're always looking to identify those who are suffering particular disadvantage, and to identify policy changes to overcome it. We wanted to know why (and indeed if) such adverse outcomes existed, and whether this was simply down to employer misperception.

As our country faces the recessionary consequences of a pandemic lockdown, I fear that those who already suffer disadvantage will also be those who bear the brunt of economic hardship. The publication of this report, when businesses across the United Kingdom are looking to recover and are depending in large part upon the quality of their people, could not therefore be more timely.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this report has found some themes that are fairly common to much of our work on achieving a successful, sustainable transition: early preparation; mentoring; translatable and transferable skills; an understanding of the market in the area of intended civilian life. To be fair to those charged with preparing Service leavers, in the last few years we have seen a step change in the attitude of senior leaders, and the quality of transition support. That isn't to say it's perfect; this report provides qualitative evidence that all too often

the 'offer' made to those preparing to leave the Armed Forces is inconsistent, and not tailored to the unique needs of the individual.

Where we can highlight the challenges facing the SNCO cadre though is through understanding their career paths. Unlike officers of a similar age at retirement, SNCOs are more likely to have entered service with modest educational qualifications and without adult experience of civilian life and the workplace. By reaching senior leadership positions, SNCOs have arguably progressed proportionately more than officer colleagues and are more likely therefore to value the associated status, be reluctant to leave the Armed Forces and have salary expectations that might not be realistic in the civilian world. Moreover, many of our studies have highlighted how those who have served for longer (and hence occupy more senior and individual leadership positions) are less likely to seize the available transition preparation opportunities.

This combination of employer misperception, and employee misunderstanding and loss of identity, makes for a cocktail of disadvantage. Our call to action is simple, and two-pointed.

Firstly, individual SNCOs should plan their transition knowledgeably, comprehensively and in time, and should not be put off by false expectation, a misplaced sense of loyalty to the task, or an inconsiderate chain of command. This change is cultural and needs top down leadership to imbue.

Secondly, we must find a way for employers and society more widely to better understand the benefits brought by ex-Service personnel, and in this case specifically the magnificent cadre of SNCOs. They have formed the back bone of the UK's Armed Forces for centuries, and it's negligent of us all both to make their transition harder than others', and to ignore the contribution they bring to the civilian world. Fixing this will need unparalleled collaboration between Government, employment representative bodies and employers themselves. We intend to energize this work, and make these changes happen.

Acknowledgements

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Acronyms

AFC	Armed Forces Covenant
APS	Annual Population Survey
ASHE	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings
BFRS	British Forces Resettlement Service
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
CO	Commissioned Officer
CTP	Career Transition Partnership
CTW	Career Transition Workshop
ELC	Enhanced Learning Credit
HND	Higher National Diploma
IRTC	Individual Resettlement Training Costs
JNCO	Junior Non-Commissioned Officer
LASS	Canada, the Life After Service Studies
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OR	Other Ranks
PRP	Personal Resettlement Plan
RAF	Royal Air Force
RSM	Regimental Sergeant Major
RTC	Resettlement Training Centre
SFA	Service Families Accommodation
SNCO	Senior Non-Commissioned Officer
SOC	Standard Occupational Classification
WIS	wounded, injured and sick
WO	Warrant Officer

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Executive summary

Previous research studies have highlighted that Senior Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCOs) face particular challenges transitioning to civilian employment due to a variety of factors, including lower educational levels and a lack of confidence in translating military experience to civilian employers. The Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick, along with QinetiQ and RFEA, the Forces Employment Charity, were commissioned by Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) to examine the transition of SNCOs from all three Services into civilian employment (including full/part-time, self-employment, volunteering, or a combination of these) and to contribute to FiMT's evidence base to understand this particular group's unique transition challenges. The research seeks to fill the current gap in knowledge and to contribute to policy-making and improved service delivery.

Methodology

The research project involved 5 different phases of data collection:

- A review of relevant literature, both from the UK and overseas, and current employment statistics to examine the employment transitions of SNCOs;
- 9 key stakeholder interviews;
- An online survey of veteran SNCOs from all three Services (787 valid responses);
- 37 telephone interviews with veteran SNCOs and their partners;
- 5 individual case studies.

Key findings

The key objectives of the research project were: to explore the employment outcomes for SNCOs and how these compare to other comparator groups; to identify the challenges faced in securing civilian employment among SNCOs leaving the UK Armed Forces; to highlight those aspects that are unique to this cohort; and to make recommendations on how these might be addressed that are applicable to policy-makers and service providers across the UK.

Exploring the employment outcomes for veteran SNCOs and how these compare to other comparator groups

- Veteran SNCOs from across the three services appear to fare relatively well in terms of gaining employment after leaving the Armed Forces: over three-quarters (79.8%) reported that they were currently working (either employed or self-employed, full-time or part-time); 8.2% were unemployed and looking for work, with 0.1% unemployed but not looking for work. 4.5% of participants were unable to work due to poor health or disability, and this percentage was much higher for Army veteran SNCOs than the other Services.
- The percentage working is highest for RAF veteran SNCOs, while the percentage unemployed is highest for Navy veteran SNCOs.
- 14.0% of all SNCOs (22% of Navy SNCOs) reported that they had planned to undertake further training or study upon leaving, but only 0.8% were currently in full-time training or study.

- Existing available data does not differentiate between NCOs and Other Ranks, and so it was not possible to compare veteran SNCOs' employment outcomes with other similar groups in the civilian workforce.

Identifying the challenges faced in securing civilian employment among SNCOs leaving the UK Armed Forces and to highlight those aspects that are unique to this cohort

Pre-resettlement phase challenges (more than 2 years before leaving):

- A reluctance to leave the Services (a particular issue for SNCOs who have reached a high level of seniority within the Services): this reluctance to leave can affect engagement with planning ahead and with resettlement courses.

Resettlement phase challenges (up to 2 years before leaving):

- Not getting the time to engage with resettlement, especially if SNCOs have an unsupportive boss and a very senior and responsible role, which cannot be easily covered (again, this would appear to be a particular issue for those SNCOs with greater levels of seniority).
- A lack of satisfaction by some SNCOs with the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) courses, e.g. some found the courses generic; others found the courses too short, given the length of time in Service.
- Some difficulties faced by SNCOs in accessing resettlement courses in the area in which they have chosen to live after leaving, leading to a lack of understanding and knowledge of local labour markets.
- A perceived lack of engagement and support by employers.
- A lack of ex-SNCO mentors providing realistic advice to those about to leave.

Transition phase challenges (making the move):

- Available jobs not matching current salary: SNCOs tend to aspire to a similar middle management role upon leaving, but these are generally unavailable to veteran SNCOs or do not exist in the civilian labour market.
- SNCOs' skills and experience under-valued or misunderstood by potential employers: a lack of recognised qualifications mean that SNCOs often find it difficult to compete with similar-aged non-veterans in the workplace and Officers who are more likely to have a degree.
- Employers more willing to take on and train younger veterans but unwilling to take a risk on older veteran SNCOs (perceived institutionalisation and inability to fit in).

Challenges in the transition phase varied by Service, gender and age:

- **Service:** RAF veteran SNCOs are more likely to make a successful transition than other Services; Army veteran SNCOs find a lack of interview experience/skills and negative attitudes from potential employers to be challenging, whereas Navy veteran SNCOs report an inability to sell themselves well to an employer to be challenging.
- **Gender:** Female veteran SNCOs appear to fare worse than males in their ability to sell themselves to employers and their levels of self-confidence, and also report higher

mental health issues. Men are more likely than women to report a lack of support from the Armed Forces transition services, negative attitudes from potential employers and a lack of relevant skills and qualifications to be challenging when seeking work, as well as available jobs not matching current skills.

- **Age:** Younger veteran SNCOs overall find these issues to be more challenging than older veteran SNCOs. Mental health issues are a challenge for many when leaving the Services, but particularly for female and younger veteran SNCOs.

Post-transition challenges:

- A difference in work culture and work ethic, different management styles and a perceived lack of commitment by civilians negatively affected many SNCOs.

Other challenges in the post-transition phase varied by Service, gender, age, education and seniority:

- **Service:** RAF veteran SNCOs find issues while in work to be less of a challenge than the other Services, whereas a greater proportion of Army veteran SNCOs find an inability to adapt to a civilian environment to be a serious challenge, as well as an inability to make as much money as expected and negative attitudes from work colleagues. More Army veteran SNCOs report mental health issues to be extremely or very challenging, while more than a quarter of Navy veteran SNCOs report an inability to use their skills and experience to be a challenge.
- **Gender:** Male veteran SNCOs are more likely than female to report lower earnings than expected as a challenge.
- **Age:** Younger veteran SNCOs find many issues to be more challenging than older veteran SNCOs, including mental health issues after transition.
- **Education:** Those with higher educational qualifications are more likely to be in work than those with lower or no qualifications (full-time employment also declines in line with a decline in qualifications, and inactivity is highest for those with poorer qualifications).
- **Seniority:** A loss of identity and status appear to be a particular issue for SNCOs when transitioning out of the Services. This is linked to length of time in Service, as many have been in the Armed Forces for over 20 years. Those in more senior roles within the Services are also more likely to suffer from a lack of status upon leaving.

The following section provides a series of recommendations based on the research findings.

Recommendations

A successful transition is defined by the SNCOs themselves as: being happy and content with their situation; having enough money; enjoying work; and having a good work-life balance. Based on the research findings, a series of recommendations are set out below to ensure and support a successful transition. These recommendations are aimed at particular groups: veteran SNCOs, the MOD, military charities and employers (see also Figures 8.1 and 8.2).

Veteran SNCOs

- SNCOs' experience and military-related skills are often under-valued in the civilian labour market, partly because their particular skillset is misunderstood and not easily transferable. Our data also shows that the unique skills of SNCOs, combined with their age, may be a disadvantage when competing with civilians for jobs. To maximise their chances of a rewarding second career, **SNCOs need to take advantage of opportunities to upskill and reskill while still in the Services**, e.g. by making sure they have developed transferable skills or gained nationally-recognisable qualifications to make them more attractive to potential employers.
- Although highly experienced, many SNCOs are still relatively young and can have 15 to 20 years of working life still ahead of them when they leave, unlike Officers who are more likely to have reached the end of a full career. **The pre-transition phase for an SNCO should include self-directed planning and research** to develop a realistic and practical approach to employment and life beyond the Services.
- SNCOs often engage with resettlement too late for a variety of reasons. This means that they have not taken full advantage of what is on offer to them and have not researched the civilian job market in their local area and what kinds of jobs would suit them best. As a result, some choose resettlement courses which are ill-suited to the jobs they are likely to get in civilian life or choose not to attend courses which may be useful. Many have unrealistic expectations of the kinds of jobs and salaries they will get after leaving. To improve the transition experience, **SNCOs need to prioritise their resettlement over their job**, engaging fully with the process by attending potentially relevant courses and workshops and identifying the likely jobs available to them after leaving. For example, many veteran SNCOs commented upon the importance of employers getting involved in the resettlement process in order to gain a fuller understanding of what kinds of jobs are available and what skills are required to be successful in securing those jobs, even though there are existing Employment Fairs and Company Events which require SNCOs' voluntary engagement.
- SNCOs are often reluctant to leave the Services but have no choice to remain. As a group they are also less likely than other veterans to ask for help and support, as they are responsible for younger and more junior serving personnel and are expected to be tough and able to cope. Isolation from friends and colleagues and loss of status upon leaving can be traumatic, especially to those who have little or no experience as an adult in the civilian world (while this applies to all veterans to some extent, SNCOs are likely to have joined while still young and have served for long periods). **SNCOs should engage fully with any mental health support offered before and after leaving**, if necessary, as well as **avoiding negative behaviours** (e.g. alcohol and drug abuse) and **engaging with other military charities** if and when needed.

- Many SNCOs have had no previous experience of non-military employment or job-searching, having entered the military at 16 or 17, and have become institutionalised after such a long period in the Services. As a result, the prospect of civilian life can be particularly daunting. As part of the pre-transition phase, **SNCOs need to accept that they are leaving and be ready to move on**, taking advantage of skills such as adaptability and resilience, developed during their time in the military.
- Due to their time in the Services, their status and the close-knit nature of military life, veteran SNCOs often have fewer networks to draw on in the civilian world compared with other cohorts, such as Officers or those who have served for a shorter period of time. RAF veteran SNCOs tend to be closer to the civilian labour market due to their contact with contractors and may have therefore built up greater external networks than those in the Army or Navy. To support their transition from the military, **SNCOs from all Services should explore ways in which to expand their networks** (both informal and formal) beyond the military.
- Veteran SNCOs, along with many other veterans, are often unaware of the kinds of jobs available within the area in which they plan to move when they leave the Services. With a view to improving their employment prospects, **SNCOs need to explore and learn about local labour market opportunities** and recognise where suitable jobs are located, as well as using intermediate jobs as 'stepping stones' if necessary. In some situations, veteran **SNCOs may need to be prepared to either commute or move to where suitable jobs are available**, especially when they have particular skillsets which are not easily transferable to the civilian labour market.

MOD

- The proportion of veteran SNCOs suffering from mental health issues after leaving the Services is concerning. With a view to improving the transition and longer-term experiences of SNCOs, **the MOD should help SNCOs to detach themselves emotionally from the military and accept that they are leaving**. This could involve the provision of **compulsory mental health and practical advice workshops** (or drop-in sessions) before leaving, as well as **access to refresher courses after 2 years** if an SNCO is unemployed and/or in need of additional support.
- Many veteran SNCOs are unable to take full advantage of their resettlement, due to their responsibilities and an unsupportive boss, which leaves them at a disadvantage in the civilian labour market. **The MOD and Commanding Officers should ensure that SNCOs are provided with adequate time to complete resettlement courses and actively encourage them to do so**. To ensure that SNCOs are fully prepared for the civilian labour market, **the MOD should also support and allow their move into a 'transition' role 2 years before leaving**.
- Those SNCOs with a greater length of service, as well as higher levels of seniority and experience, appear to have particular difficulties in adjusting to civilian workplaces and different management styles. To strengthen the CTP offer to ensure it fits with current labour market demands and to recognise and reward a greater length of service and seniority, **the MOD should consider providing bespoke sessions for the most senior SNCOs on networking, interview techniques and adapting behaviours**, as well as arranging talks by potential employers and ex-SNCOs from a similar background who have already had experience of civilian life. **Other bespoke**

sessions may need to be considered for female veteran SNCOs and for Navy veteran SNCOs who appear to find particular difficulties in translating their skills and experience into civilian employment.

- Because many veteran SNCOs face problems and challenges long after leaving, due to their particular difficulties in reintegrating into civilian life, **the MOD should consider the delivery of support over the longer-term**, perhaps as a mixed-mode method (including online modules, advice and labour market information) to ensure accessibility and availability to all beyond the current 2 years of support.
- Many veteran SNCOs reported that they were ill-prepared for civilian employment and that their aspirations did not match the reality of what was available to them. **The MOD, in collaboration with charities and employers, should better manage the expectations of SNCOs** in terms of the roles available to them in the civilian labour market, the qualifications and skills required, as well as likely salaries.
- SNCOs with fewer qualifications have poorer labour market outcomes after leaving the Services: while this is perhaps unsurprising and could apply to all veterans, SNCOs typically serve for extended periods of time (i.e. over 20 years). The findings also show that levels of training after leaving are low among SNCOs. **Throughout the career of an SNCO, the MOD should provide advice and encourage upskilling and retraining** to ensure their workforce is up-to-date, but is also ready for the civilian labour market after leaving.
- Some SNCOs commented that they did their resettlement courses in areas different to where they were going to settle and that the advice provided on available jobs was therefore misaligned. To improve the transition experience of all SNCOs (and other similar veterans), **the MOD should ensure that resettlement support is provided at the local level, where possible**, in order to make it relevant.
- A working spouse or partner can provide financial support for those SNCOs who wish to retrain or upskill after leaving the Services to provide better employment opportunities, especially as they also have a financial buffer from their pension. However, the evidence shows that those veteran SNCOs with a degree or equivalent are most likely to have an economically active spouse, who is also most likely to be in full-time work, whereas those with lower qualifications are most likely to have a spouse who is not working. **The MOD should support all military spouses/partners to find and maintain work, and treat transition at the family level**, e.g. by allowing spouses/partners to attend courses and workshops.

Charities

- Many SNCOs join the military at a very young age and have not had to take responsibility for mortgages, tax returns, finding a GP and schools for children, etc. Many commented that when they left the Services, they had to confront a multitude of changes to their way of life and found it overwhelming to have to take responsibility for so many different things at once, including the pressure to find a job. **Charities, in consultation and collaboration with the MOD, employers and other charities, should work together** to explore how SNCOs can be supported during the pre-transition phase and beyond, perhaps providing support on different topics (e.g. finances, healthcare) on a staggered, more manageable basis.

- GDPR restrictions may prevent charities from maintaining links with the most vulnerable veterans. SNCOs as a group are also the group least likely to seek out help due to the expectation that they are tough and resilient. To support those most in need of help, and to avoid them falling through the cracks, **charities need to be able to identify these individuals, maintain links with them and establish a buddy system so support is available over a longer period.**

Employers

- SNCOs are very keen to hear from employers about what kinds of skills are needed for particular jobs and also what civilian employment is really like. With a view to improving collaborations with the MOD, it is suggested that **employers should get involved at all stages of an SNCO's transition from the military to civilian life** by providing, for example, regular talks to Service personnel on skills and jobs available, help with 'civilianising' CVs, interview techniques, etc. Although Employment Fairs and Company Events are already available to SNCOs, there may be a greater need for wider advertising and advance notice, as well as support from Commanding Officers, allowing SNCOs to book ahead, especially those with greater job responsibilities.
- After leaving the Services, SNCOs often commented on a lack of understanding by employers of their particular skillset and experience, and the difficulties they faced in explaining these in an interview, partly due to lack of practice. However, it is clear that they have a wealth of transferable skills which should be highly valued by many employers. Through greater collaboration and work with SNCOs and the MOD, **employers can learn to recognise SNCO-specific qualifications, skills and experience, and how these can be of benefit to their organisation and sector**, providing a 'win-win' to employers and veterans over the longer-term.
- Many SNCOs commented that they had to adjust their language, humour and management style to fit into civilian employment. While this may apply to all military veterans, this appeared to be especially difficult for those who had served for longer. For those employers recruiting veteran SNCOs, **there should be recognition and support to allow SNCOs to settle and adapt to the workplace.**
- Many SNCOs would value greater experience of civilian jobs before leaving, and this is especially important for those who have served for extended periods of time, with little or no prior experience of civilian employment. **The Armed Forces Covenant should ensure that employers offer a range of opportunities**, such as workplace shadowing, mentoring and work placements, to support SNCOs during the pre- and post-transition phase. These can be linked to the Bronze, Silver and Gold awards and will need to be monitored regularly for compliance. For example, current Gold award holders need to proactively demonstrate forces-friendly recruitment and selection processes, engage with CTP, be registered on the Forces Families Jobs portal, be an exemplar in the sector for advocating support to Armed Forces members, and provide 10 days' leave for reservists, as well as maintaining the criteria for Bronze and Silver. It is suggested that the Gold Award could include more specific and measurable actions relating to veterans' employment support, such as those described above.

1. Introduction

This report is presented by the University of Warwick's Institute for Employment Research (IER), along with QinetiQ and RFEA, the Forces Employment Charity, in response to the research requirement from the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) to examine the transition of Senior Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCOs) from all three Services into civilian employment (including full/part-time, self-employment, volunteering, or a combination of these).

The aim of FiMT is to provide an evidence base to influence and underpin policy-making and service delivery to allow ex-Service personnel and their families to lead successful civilian lives. In particular, FiMT's driving purpose is to help those who need additional help when leaving the Services and entering the civilian world.

Recent studies have highlighted that SNCOs face particular challenges transitioning to civilian employment due to lower educational attainment levels and a lack of confidence in translating military experience to civilian employers. Findings also suggest that the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) resettlement package gives them less confidence than other groups of veterans in their ability to secure employment (Kantar Futures, 2017). The research presented in this report contributes to FiMT's evidence base to understand this particular group's unique transition challenges and offers a series of recommendations to influence relevant policy-making and service delivery.

The objectives of this research were:

- To explore the employment outcomes for SNCOs and how these compare to other comparator groups; and
- To identify the challenges faced in securing civilian employment among SNCOs leaving the UK Armed Forces;
- To highlight those aspects that are unique to this cohort; and
- To make recommendations on how these might be addressed that are applicable to policy-makers and service providers across the UK.

The research was conducted between November 2018 and December 2019.

1.1 Report structure

The report is structured in the following way:

- Executive Summary
- Recommendations
- Section 1: Introduction
- Section 2: Methodology
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Sections 4 to 7 draw together evidence from the literature review, secondary data analysis, interviews with stakeholders and military veteran SNCOs and partners, plus evidence from the online survey with veteran SNCOs.

2. Methodology

2.1 Scope

SNCOs as a group are defined as Officers who have not earned a commission, from the rank of Sergeant (or equivalent) through to Warrant Officer in the British Army, Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and the Royal Marines (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Definition of SNCO by Service

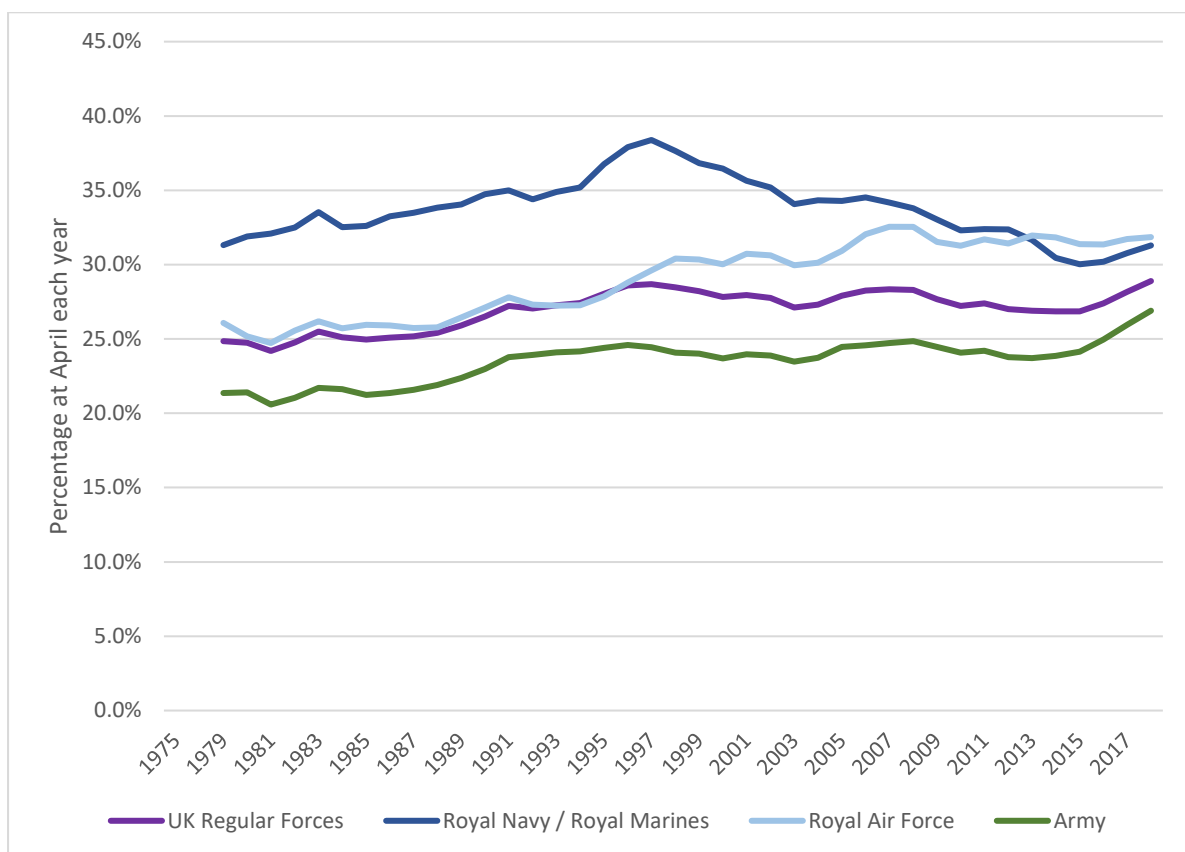
Royal Navy	Royal Marines	Army	Royal Air Force
- Warrant Officer 1 (WO1) - Warrant Officer 2 (WO2) - Chief Petty Officer (CPO) - Petty Officer (PO)	- Warrant Officer Class 1 (WO1) - Warrant Officer Class 2 (WO2) - Colour Sergeant (CSgt) - Sergeant (Sgt)	- Warrant Officer Class 1 (WO1) - Warrant Officer Class 2 (WO2) - Staff Sergeant (SSgt)* - Sergeant (Sgt)*	- Warrant Officer (WO) - Flight Sergeant (FS) - Chief Technician (CT) - Master Aircrew (MACR) - Sergeant (Sgt)

* The roles of Staff Sergeant and Sergeant in the Army include regimental equivalents.

Recent figures (reported in July 2018) show that 81.4% of all UK Regular Forces are classified as Other Ranks (ORs) and, of these, SNCOs (OR6-OR9) comprise almost 30%¹. Figure 2.1 shows that the proportion of SNCOs has risen across all Services when combined, with increases within the Army and the Royal Air Force, and a gradual decrease over time within the Royal Navy. All Services demonstrate a slight increase in more recent years, however.

¹ Latest figures (reported in October 2019) show that 81% of all UK Regular Forces are classified as Other Ranks (ORs) and, of these, SNCOs (OR6-OR9) comprise just over 29%. Ministry of Defence (2019). *Quarterly Service Personnel Statistics - Defence Statistics (Tri-Service)*. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-2019>

Figure 2.1: SNCOs by Service over time



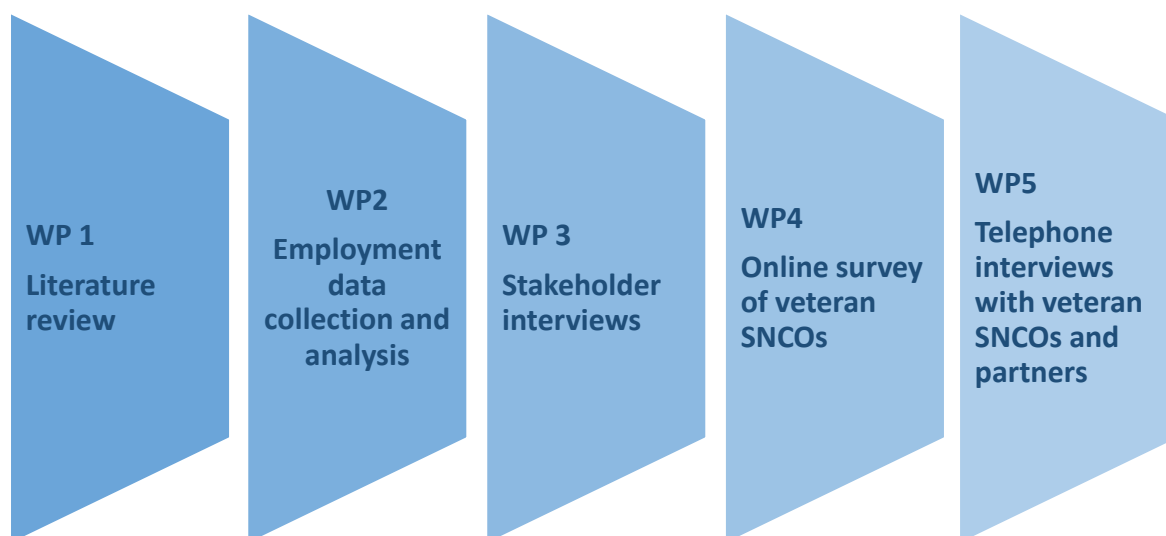
Source: MOD Monthly Service Personnel Statistics, 1 July 2018; see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-armed-forces-monthly-service-personnel-statistics-2018>

In this research, we include SNCOs who have transitioned from all three Services and incorporate a detailed examination of their employment experiences and decisions after leaving the Armed Forces (including the reasons why some experience challenges in finding and retaining employment after leaving military service). Where possible, we distinguish in the survey analysis between Warrant Officers (WOs) and Other Senior NCOs, given the greater levels of responsibility and recognised seniority of WO’s within the Services, and to identify any particular differences in outcomes and challenges by seniority level.

2.2 The mixed-methods study

In order to answer the research objectives, a mixed-methods study was conducted, incorporating five distinct Work Packages (WP 1-5). Figure 2.3 demonstrates the programme of work.

Figure 2.3: Overview of methodology



2.2.1 WP1: Literature review

- 185 articles and reports were assessed, including grey literature found on UK and international websites;
- 20 pieces of evidence were included in the review;
- Literature from the UK and internationally were assessed.

A systematic literature review was undertaken of evidence relating to the employment transitions of SNCOs. The aim was to examine and synthesise evidence, from the UK and internationally, on the employment transitions, including any barriers and challenges, of this particular group. The literature search was undertaken in five databases and two platforms, which enabled access to a further 12 databases using a keyword search strategy. Whilst the main review was undertaken from December 2018 to March 2019, further searches were undertaken between October and November 2019 to capture any new evidence. Of the 185 articles and reports reviewed in full, including grey literature identified from the UK and international websites, 20 pieces of evidence were included in the final review.

2.2.2 WP2: Employment data collection and analysis

- Secondary analysis of a number of datasets was undertaken to try to better understand the demographic profile and characteristics of veteran SNCOs, in comparison with similar-aged non-veterans.

An analysis of national data sources was undertaken. Due to the difficulties in accessing data specifically on SNCOs we have been unable to provide comparisons with similar-aged non-veterans (see Section 3.2).

2.2.3 WP3: Stakeholder interviews

- 9 key stakeholder telephone interviews were conducted between April and August 2019.

A total of 9 semi-structured, in-depth telephone interviews² were conducted with representatives from organisations experienced in providing support and advice to veteran SNCOs on their transition from the Services. Stakeholder interview questions were informed by the literature review and also explored the participant's organisation and his/her role within that organisation. Stakeholder interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes; comprehensive notes were taken, typed up and the data was thematically analysed³.

2.2.4 WP4: Online survey with veteran SNCOs

- An online survey of veteran SNCOs ran from 1st July to 1st October 2019.
- The survey received 787 valid responses from veteran SNCOs (568 respondents completed 100% of the survey questions).

An online survey was designed and promoted via RFEA, the Forces Employment Charity, to veteran SNCOs, as well as via the stakeholders interviewed in WP3 and via social media. The survey was conducted in order to explore in more depth key research questions concerning barriers to employment for those SNCOs transitioning from the Services. Questions were informed by the stakeholder interviews and the literature review, and included: demographic characteristics; length of time since leaving the Armed Forces; sources of advice and support received; satisfaction with support received; challenges faced in looking for and in maintaining employment; and other issues which affect outcomes for veteran SNCOs.

2.2.5 WP5: Qualitative interviews with veteran SNCOs and partners, and case studies

- 37 interviews were conducted from July to November 2019.
- Participants were selected to reflect the overall population of SNCOs as far as possible. Due to a limited number of partners signing up, a wide-ranging approach was taken to recruitment and selection.
- Similar questions as the survey were asked, grouped around main themes.

² Studies comparing telephone and face to face interviews have found no significant differences between the quality of the data captured: e.g. Sturges, J. E. and Hanrahan, K. J. (2004). Comparing Telephone and Face-to-Face Qualitative Interviewing: A Research Note. *Qualitative Research* 4: 107-118.

³ Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Clarke, V., and Braun, V. (2014). Thematic analysis. In: *Encyclopaedia of Critical Psychology* (pp. 1947-1952). Springer New York.

The semi-structured telephone interviews included interviews with 31 veteran SNCOs and 6 partners of veteran SNCOs⁴. All interviewees were offered a £15 gift voucher to thank them for their time. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour and notes were taken, typed up and thematically analysed.

A series of individual pathways or case studies were identified and highlighted to show differing experiences of employment transitions for veteran SNCOs, and the challenges involved. These are incorporated into the final report.

⁴ Partner is used to refer to a military spouse (husband or wife) and those in a relationship.

3. Setting the context

3.1 The literature review

Introduction

There is much known about the transitions of military personnel to civilian life in terms of their experiences and outcomes, the impact on their health and well-being, and the impact on family, friends and relationships. Psychological factors that are positively linked to a successful military to civilian transition are reported to be resilience, adaptability, being able to distance self from military, and being proactive in the process (e.g. Cox et al., 2016; Kantar Futures, 2017; Lyonette et al., 2018; Parry et al., 2019; Wrexham Glyndwr University, 2018). Similarly, preparedness and planning were noted as important, such as starting job search activities early (Cox et al., 2016). Social resources such as supportive partners, families and friends, as well as being networked into local communities and veterans' groups, are considered essential for a successful transition (e.g. Cox et al., 2016; Hundt et al., 2015; Kantar Futures, 2017; Lyonette et al., 2018). Cox and colleagues (2016) also note a number of factors that can negatively impact on transitions, including traumatic experiences during service, injury and unwillingness to discuss and share emotions, and feeling overwhelmed. Structural factors (such as branch and role within the military, age, education level, and years of experience) are reported to have neither a positive nor negative impact on transitions to civilian life, suggesting that there are other factors, or a combination of factors, at play (Cox et al., 2016).

Those who do not have a good transition and are unable to adjust to civilian life have difficulties with finding employment, managing their finances, securing accommodation and maintaining their health, with many turning to substance abuse (Stern, 2015), which emphasises the importance of supporting military personnel's transition. Some research suggests that nearly half of newly hired veterans leave their first post-military job within the first year (Maury, Stone & Roseman, 2014), which perhaps suggests that not all transitions are meeting veterans' aspirations and expectations.

Whilst there is research on military personnel transitions to civilian life, there is little analysis on how those of different rank experience transition, with most research focusing only on differences between Officers and other ranks. SNCOs are treated as homogenous with other ranks, but this fails to take into account the length of service and the level of responsibility of an SNCO, compared to other ranks. These factors impact and influence their transitions from the military to civilian life, which is outlined next.

Finding and applying for work

Research has shown gaps in the knowledge of HR managers and a lack of understanding of the strategic capabilities of NCOs⁵ (Cox et al., 2016; Ford, 2017; Gaither, 2014). This is further

⁵ This research and others below did not distinguish between JNCOs and SNCOs; where distinctions are made, we report according to the more detailed categorisation. In the literature, JNCO refers to Corporals in the British Armed Forces.

exacerbated by veterans' lack of experience in finding and applying for work in the civilian labour market. For example, Parry and colleagues (2019), who undertook a mixed methods study of female Service leavers, suggested that veterans, particularly those who had attained NCO rank, lack interview experience. This, as well as their lack of experience in civilian employment, is considered to put them at a distinct disadvantage compared to civilians. Conversely, it has been argued that those at Officer and NCO rank have often had more training and greater experience, which can be considered an advantage in some roles, such as police officer and prison officer. Overall, the research findings suggested that experienced NCOs would be well suited to some jobs that employers consider suitable for ex-Officers. It was suggested that some employers were shifting their recruitment practices to accommodate this new thinking.

In the USA, Johnston and colleagues (2010) undertook a small study, with 10 NCOs who each had over 20 years' service in the Marine Corps, to examine military-civilian transitions, and the challenges associated with a mid-life transition. Two spouses were also interviewed as part of the study. All of the participants took part in a Transition Assistance Programme. The research focused on: factors influencing transition to the civilian workplace; and greatest concerns in terms of job skills, career issues or personal issues. The research identified a number of factors influencing the career transitions of NCOs in the study. A key problem identified by NCO Marines was the lack of information and the fact that it was provided too late (Johnston et al., 2010). It was suggested that with the information gained from the Transition Assistance Programme, they would have been preparing to transition a lot earlier, which would have helped with finding and applying for work. Similarly, Arendt and Sapp (2014) found that junior and senior NCOs needed additional support with applying for jobs. They analysed the CVs of veterans to provide guidance and recommendations to support NCOs find employment. It was noted that key to support was helping them translate their knowledge, skills and experience to a civilian context, ensuring that it was understandable (Arendt & Sapp, 2014; Gaither, 2014). Veterans were reported to have highly desirable job skills that were often not highlighted in their CVs.

It is important to note that not all veterans are looking for civilian work at an equivalent level to that of the military. Only 22% of a recent survey of 1,786 service leavers reported that the seniority of the civilian roles was important, with 55% stating that it was more important to find a role in which they could develop and progress (Deloitte, 2018).

No research was found on the type of employment or roles that SNCOs are taking in the civilian sector. However, NCOs expressed a need for a role where they can maintain their professional status and identity, be treated fairly and be able to find satisfying and meaningful work in the civilian workplace (Binks & Cambridge, 2018; Johnston et al., 2010). Furthermore, a mixed-methods study examining veterans who were self-employed reported that Officers were more likely to leave the military and own a business than SNCOs, NCOs and other ranks (Lyonette et al., 2018). SNCOs, as well as NCOs and other ranks, were more likely to be self-employed as a tradesperson or franchisee, expressing a need to be their own boss. Those who owned businesses were trainers, fitness instructors, consultants, or were using their previous military experiences.

From Canada, the Life After Service Studies (LASS) provide some evidence on the employment rates of veterans. The research aimed to understand the transition from military

to civilian life and to provide recommendations for veterans' healthcare (Van Til et al., 2016). SNCOs (57%) were found to have a lower employment rate than Officers (64%) and junior NCOs (70%). Generally, evidence suggests that SNCOs have poorer transition experiences than others (Binks & Cambridge, 2018; Black & Papile, 2010; Johnston et al., 2010; Van Til et al., 2016). Connelly's qualitative study (2016), which focuses on the Army, notes that an important part of a successful transition from the military to civilian life is financial awareness, with a suggestion that this needs to be developed early. Transitions are also considered to be easier for those who have secured housing before leaving the service. However, the evidence points to a range of factors that are influencing SNCOs' transition experiences and outcomes, including pay and reward, education and qualifications, and health and well-being.

Pay and reward

There is past evidence to suggest that veterans are unable to match the salaries they received in the military, often accepting jobs with lower pay in order to secure any employment. Recent research confirms this, with 42% of female veterans reporting that it is 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to match their military pay (Parry et al., 2019). It is important to note that no significant difference was found between the pay of female Officers and other ranks, or between junior NCOs and senior NCOs. Research from Canada suggests that most veterans are satisfied with their pay, with Officers having the highest satisfaction rate (85%) compared to SNCOs (75%), and junior NCOs (60%) (Van Til et al., 2016).

US Marine Corps NCOs' economic and financial concerns were a significant influence on the job offers they accepted in order to achieve a stable income and stability for family (Johnston et al., 2010). They also had concerns about getting adequate health care. This is understandable, given that those at a senior level (equivalent to SNCO in the UK) are more likely than other ranks and Officers to have children (Hosek & Wadsworth, 2013).

Further research in the USA has reported that the financial conditions of military families have improved, and are continuing to improve, with higher levels of pay for serving personnel, additional support for families with deployed partners, as well as healthcare provision (Hosek & Wadsworth, 2013). However, it is questionable whether the higher pay compensates for a partner's disrupted career and income; this could be particularly the case for partners of long-serving personnel.

Education and qualifications

There is mixed evidence on the role of education and qualifications in the transition of SNCOs. Connelly's qualitative study (2016) reported that the professional education and training provided to all ranks in the UK Army is appropriate to their role, and also supports with promotion to SNCO level. It is posited that all in the military are encouraged to take advantage of professional and career opportunities. SNCOs taking leadership and management training and education courses can use this to gain civilian accredited qualifications and memberships to professional bodies. Some suggest that those of higher ranks experience easier transitions, as they are more likely to have attained a higher level qualification (Morin, 2011). Research from Canada confirms that this is the case, with 75% of Officers having attained a higher education qualification, compared to 6% of junior NCOs and 4% of SNCOs (Van Til et al., 2016). This suggests that there could be significant differences in the educational level of

veterans, with SNCOs not having high level or recognisable qualifications. NCOs from the US Marine Corps were found to have significant worries about the value of their skills in the civilian workplace, particularly with regard to competing for jobs with civilians with higher education qualifications (Johnston et al., 2010).

Health and wellbeing

The health and wellbeing of veterans is a widely debated issue, with a range of evidence on what is needed and what works, with much evidence from Canada and the US, and on psychological issues. Some evidence on the differences in the health of SNCOs compared to others has been reported. The self-rated mental and physical health of SNCOs in Canada was low compared to those of Officers and junior NCOs (Rebeira et al., 2015; Van Til et al., 2016; Van Den Kerkhof et al., 2015). The survey on *Transition to Civilian Life*, completed by 3,154 Canadian Armed Forces Regular Force Veterans and analysed by Thompson and colleagues (2015), reported that Junior NCOs were the only rank group with a high level of disability. They were also noted to have the highest rate of medical discharge, limiting employability. Junior NCOs are seen as a 'potentially vulnerable group' due to higher occupational physical demands (Thompson et al., 2015). This suggests that SNCOs could also be at risk, which is highlighted in further research from Canada. The LASS reported that only 52% of veterans have an easy adjustment to civilian life, while 32% reported difficulties. SNCOs had a high rate of difficult adjustment (29%), as did Junior Non-Commissioned Officers (JNCOs; 39%), compared to Officers (17%) (Van Til et al., 2016). This could be the result of a variety of health problems reported by veterans, including arthritis, depression, anxiety, PTSD, hearing problems, pain and limited activity. SNCOs had the highest reported rate of arthritis (40%).

In terms of wellbeing, the loss of camaraderie, social support and community created by colleagues, as well as fitting into civilian culture, are concerns for veterans, influencing their transitions. Research that has focused on SNCOs highlights similar concerns (e.g. Hundt et al., 2015; Johnston et al., 2010). For example, a small study of veterans with PTSD examined the role that networks and informal peer support play in helping transitions to civilian life (Hundt et al., 2015). The SNCOs participating in the study stressed the importance of such support.

Key findings from the literature

- There is a lack of evidence and understanding on SNCO transitions from the military, their experiences of civilian life and their labour market outcomes.
- For SNCOs, evidence suggests that key to a good (or easier) transition is having a higher level qualification, being able to attain a stable income, plus having good peer support and networks. This complements evidence on transitions to civilian life for all military personnel, which has identified the need for resilience, adaptability, flexibility and planning.
- SNCOs have particular concerns about financial stability and attaining a stable income in the civilian labour market.
- Information and support delivered as part of transition programmes is often provided too late for SNCOs who could have started earlier with their job search, CV writing, etc., if had they known.

- SNCOs are at greater risk of poor physical and mental health due to the higher occupational physical demands placed on them during their service.
- For a role in the civilian labour market, NCOs want to be able to maintain their professional status and identity, and find meaningful work (no specific information was available on SNCOs' aspirations).
- Employers lack an understanding of what roles would be appropriate for SNCOs.

3.2 Comparisons of employment status of veteran SNCOs with similar non-veterans

In addition to the literature review, we set out to respond to the first objective: 'to explore the employment outcomes for SNCOs and how these compare to other comparator groups'. It is extremely difficult to measure the employment situation of Armed Forces veterans, because of the lack of information published from official statistics on those in the Armed Forces. The main sources of data on the labour market situation of the population are:

1. The Census of Population;
2. The Labour Force Survey (LFS)/Annual Population Survey (APS);
3. The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE).

The Census of Population and ASHE covers Armed Forces establishments, but the LFS/APS excludes communal establishments. It thus only covers members of the Armed Forces and veterans living in private residences. The ASHE is a survey of employers, reporting information on their current employees, so will not identify veterans. All three identify members of the Armed Forces through their occupation. The 2010 Standard Occupational Classification has two occupation unit groups which cover the Armed Forces:

- 1171: Officers in Armed Forces
- 3311: NCOs and other ranks

Therefore, SNCOs cannot be identified unambiguously in employment data derived from these sources.⁶ In the April to June quarter of 2018 (Table 3.1), there were nearly 50,000 persons working in Armed Forces ranks, and over 35,000 could be SNCOs (as they have supervisory responsibilities).

⁶ It may be possible to identify current SNCOs by cross-tabulating occupation group 3311 against supervisory responsibility (this is possible for the LFS/APS).

Table 3.1: Identifying SNCOs in the LFS (April-June quarter 2018)

	Count	Unweighted
SOC 3311 one year previously	46,399	58
SOC 3311 current	49,815	66
SOC 3311 current with supervisory responsibility	35,355	48

Source: Labour Force Survey (April-June 2018)

Table 3.2: Occupational change 2017-2018

Occupation in 2018	Count	Percent	Unweighted
3311 'NCOs and other ranks'	36,843	85.7	49
3312 'Police officers (sergeant and below)'	1,197	2.8	1
5242 'Telecommunications engineers'	942	2.2	1
7115 'Vehicle and parts salespersons and advisers'	934	2.2	1
8211 'Large goods vehicle drivers'	1,277	3.0	2
9120 'Elementary construction occupations'	1,773	4.1	2
All in 3311 one year previously	42,966	100.0	56

Source: Labour Force Survey (April-June 2018)

However, to identify veteran SNCOs, it is necessary to have information on their occupation in a previous job. The LFS provides information on occupation one year before (and the Secure version includes previous job and any job made redundant from). The number of respondents identified as moving out of an Armed Forces rank into another occupation is very small (Table 3.2)⁷.

The APS includes a veteran indicator, and hence veterans whose previous job (or job one year ago) was not in the Armed Forces are also captured, but it is not possible to identify these as SNCOs.

Few surveys currently identify veteran status. The National Survey for Wales 2014/15 included a number of questions on Armed Forces service, but did not collect information on when an individual left the Forces or their occupation (and the Armed Forces questions have not appeared in later iterations of the survey). It is possible to compare the labour market status

⁷ It is important to note the small size of the unweighted sample for NCOs. This means that there is a high degree of uncertainty in the estimates from this sample survey and this increases as the NCO population is broken down by characteristics. With such a small number of observations, there is a risk that estimates can be based on a handful of people, and hence highly susceptible to random error.

of veterans by age and gender (and also against the rest of the economically active population).

Table 3.3: Wales - Economic status of veterans by gender and age (Column percentages)

	Working age (aged 16-59/64) ⁸		Pensioners (aged 60/65 and over)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Economic status - working as an employee (or temporarily away)	60.7	57.2	2.0	13.0
Economic status - on a Government sponsored training scheme (or temporarily away)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Economic status - self employed or freelance (or temporarily away)	13.9	5.5	0.9	3.1
Economic status - working unpaid for own family's business (or temporarily away)	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0
Economic status - doing any other kind of paid work	0.4	0.0	1.0	0.0
Economic status - not working	26.3	37.1	95.9	83.8
Total	266	39	352	62

Source: National Survey of Wales, 2014/15

Employment is the most common economic status for both genders, but self-employment is also significant, particularly for men. Women are more likely to be not working (although the survey does not distinguish between unemployment and economic inactivity). It is important to separate those of retirement age from those of working age in presenting data on economic status, because the former form the majority of the veteran population (although this is changing as increasing numbers of those who served in the Second World War or undertook National Service die).

⁸ The different ages reflect the different retirement ages of men and women at the time

Other sources

The 2021 Census of Population will include a question on whether an individual served in the Armed Forces. However, the information it can yield will be limited because it does not ask when the individual left the Forces, how long they served, and their rank when they left. The ONS plans to link the Census with MOD administrative data on pensions, which offers the prospect of more detail, especially if the 2020 Standard Industrial Classification includes a more detailed identification of military ranks.

The MOD should be the best source of data on the labour market status of veterans. The CTP statistics provide information on employment status in Tables 3.1 to 3.3. However, the only available information by rank contrasts the occupations of Officers and 'ranks'.

3.3 The sample of participants

In order to respond to the first research objective, to explore the employment outcomes of SNCOs, we now report on the results from the online survey and interviews conducted as part of this research. The following sub-sections describe the sample of participants in this research, including the survey participants and the interviewees (SNCOs, their partners and stakeholders).

The survey participants

A total of 787 SNCOs responded to the survey, with 568 answering most questions:

- 68.7% were from the Army; 18.9% were from the RAF; and 11.2% were from the Royal Navy or Royal Marines.
- Male participants heavily outnumbered females (91.9% v 7.8%).
- There were broadly equal numbers aged 40-49 (41.0%) and 50-59 (45.6%). Smaller proportions of participants fell into the younger and older age groups.
- 58.5% served between 22 and 25.99 years (62.4% for the Army), with smaller proportions serving for less than 22 years (23.8% overall; 27.4% for the Royal Navy) and over 22 years (17.7% overall; 33.6% of RAF veteran SNCOs). 19.6% of RAF veteran SNCOs served for over 30 years.
- The numbers leaving the Forces peaked in 2019 and 2014, with smaller peaks in 2007 and 1993. The trend is dominated by the Army. Over half of survey participants (51.2%) left 7 years ago or less (see greater detail in Appendix, Table A2.5).

(Tables on demographic details of the survey sample and a figure showing the geographical breakdown of respondents are included in the Appendix)⁹.

⁹ RFEA contacted 1536 veteran SNCOs who had signed up to receive marketing communications to take part in the survey: 383 opened the link and there were 370 unique clicks on the survey link (they may have opened the survey but not completed it, however). RFEA also promoted the survey on Twitter,

The interviewees

SNCOs and partners

Thirty-one veteran SNCOs were interviewed (25 male and six female); the majority of interviewees were aged 40-59 with only three interviewees falling either side of this age range. Most interviewees identified themselves as 'white'. At the time of the interview, interviewees differed in employment status (i.e. employed, unemployed, not in paid employment, training or studying full-time) and in personal circumstances (e.g. children/not). SNCO interviewees were drawn from across the three Services and were located across the UK. The following table provides a breakdown of interviewees by Service and SNCO rank.

Table 3.4: Interviewee by Service and SNCO rank

	Royal Navy	Royal Marines	Army	Royal Air Force	Total
Warrant Officers and Senior Non-Commissioned officers	WO 1	WO C1	WO C1	WO	4
	WO 2	WO C2	WO C2		3
	Chief Petty Officer	Colour Sergeant	Staff Sergeant	Flight Sergeant	5
	Petty Officer	Sergeant	Sergeant	Sergeant	13
Total	4		19	6	

Note: Six interviewees did not disclose their rank attained at the time of leaving the military, and two did not disclose the Service.

Only a small number of SNCO partners volunteered to be interviewed, so all were contacted and six interviews took place; all interviewees were female.

Stakeholders

A total of nine key stakeholder telephone interviews were conducted between April and August 2019. Interviews were conducted with representatives from organisations experienced in providing support and advice to veteran SNCOs on their transition from the Services. The stakeholders represented organisations that variously delivered employment, education, training and welfare support to the Armed Forces community and their families, with some targeting wounded, injured and sick (WIS) and older veterans. Seven organisations were registered charities or in the third sector, as well as one private sector and one public sector organisation. Seven provided services nationally and two provided regional and local services.

Facebook and LinkedIn. IER and QinetiQ also contacted various stakeholders to promote the survey via their distribution lists and social media.

4. Planning in advance to leave the military

Summary of findings

- The majority of veteran SNCOs left at the end of their contract (52.0%), but Army veterans were most likely to do so (58.9%) and RAF veterans least likely (23.9%); those with higher levels of seniority were also more likely to do so than those at more junior levels (67.4% v 42.6%).
- A greater proportion of RAF veterans left voluntarily (45.1%) or because of redundancy (15.5%) than veterans in the other two Services.
- A greater proportion of Army veterans left due to ill-health or injury (14.5%) than veterans in the other Services.
- Those veterans who planned ahead appeared to fare better in their transitions. Key factors involved in successful planning include: buying or renting a house in advance of leaving, upskilling while still in the Services, and expanding networks beyond the military. These findings support the existing literature.
- One of the key challenges for this group of veterans was not wanting to leave the Armed Forces.

4.1 Introduction

Sections 4 to 7 are divided into the four main phases which SNCOs move through as they transition from the Services into civilian life, including civilian employment:

- 'Planning in advance to leave the military' incorporates the time before eligibility for resettlement begins, i.e. more than 2 years before leaving.
- 'The importance of resettlement' section outlines the period 2 years before leaving when resettlement begins.
- 'Making the move' refers to the period when serving personnel leave the military and move into civilian life.
- 'Life in civvy street' outlines the longer-term outcomes after leaving the Services, when veteran SNCOs have experienced civilian life for a more extended period.

Each section includes the broad themes emerging from the data which are also linked to time-specific recommendations, as outlined in the Recommendations earlier and also in the Conclusions section. This first section describes the phase before resettlement begins, when SNCOs are still in post but are likely to be considering their options in relation to life after the Armed Forces.

4.2 Reasons for leaving the Armed Forces

Table 4.1 shows that the most common reason for leaving the Armed Forces was 'end of contract', accounting for over half of all veteran SNCOs. However, under a quarter of RAF

veteran SNCOs had left at the end of their contract, with nearly half having left voluntarily, suggesting potential differences in planning ahead for leaving. A further 15.5% of RAF veteran SNCOs had left because of redundancy. Army veteran SNCOs were most likely to have left as a result of ill health or injury and least likely to have left voluntarily. More senior veteran SNCOs (Warrant Officers or equivalent)¹⁰ were much more likely than less senior veteran SNCOs to leave at the end of their contract. It would appear from the findings that more senior Army SNCOs are those most likely to stay until the end of their contract and least likely to leave voluntarily.

Table 4.1: Reason for leaving the Armed Forces (column percentages)

Reason for leaving	Branch of Armed Forces				Seniority	
	Navy	Army	RAF	All	More senior	Less senior
At end of contract	55.8	58.9	23.9	52.0	67.4	42.6
Left early because of redundancy	3.2	4.8	15.5	6.6	2.1	9.3
Left early because of ill health or injury	11.6	14.5	7.0	12.7	11.8	13.3
Left early voluntarily	23.2	13.5	45.1	20.6	11.1	26.4
Other (please specify)	6.3	8.4	8.5	8.1	7.6	8.4
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
All reasons	95	525	142	762	288	474

Note: We highlight in red those figures which show marked differences between the groups being compared, e.g. 'Branch of Armed Forces' or 'seniority' above.

4.3 Planning ahead

There were large differences between the participants in both the survey and the interviews in terms of planning for leaving. Some had planned ahead, possibly buying a house in the area which they thought they would live in after leaving the Services, gaining new skills and qualifications while still serving and doing their research on local labour markets and what kinds of jobs were available. Those who had planned seemed to be more successful in their transitions to civilian life, which supports the findings from some of the previous literature (see Section 3.1). Others struggled in their transitions, in part due to a lack of forward planning (although other barriers and challenges are outlined later).

¹⁰ Because of possible differences in outcomes by level of seniority, we continue with the survey data analysis by distinguishing between 'more senior' SNCOs (WOs) and 'less senior' (other SNCOs).

Buying or renting a house

During the interviews, a number of SNCOs commented on the importance of buying their own house before leaving in order to reduce the stress of leaving and also to provide a settled base for themselves and their family. One veteran SNCO told us: *'When you leave it is a complete life change. They provide everything for you and all of a sudden you are having to do it yourself. So many things you have to think about'*. An RAF veteran SNCO and his wife already owned a house before he left the Services ten years before. This was a conscious decision in preparation for when he left. He chose an area to settle that he liked, that was close to a number of RAF bases (so was commutable) and his son went to the local school. He and his wife had saved to put her through a teaching qualification as a mature student a number of years earlier so she had a transferable skill if they needed to move. He had seen a number of his SNCO colleagues leave the Services without any preparation (losing their married quarter and the infrastructure they were used to) and how this had caused problems for the family, e.g. some had returned to their home town that they left 20 years ago but there was nothing there for them, and others had ended up getting jobs in the Middle East because there was nothing available locally and this had resulted in their marriages breaking up.

Another veteran SNCO had seen stress in others relating to housing and saw the *'warning signs....people making a fudge of it'*. He decided to plan ahead by buying a house which took that stress away. Another SNCO told us that he had the *'good sense'* to buy a house in the UK while stationed in Germany. He knew people who had left the Army after 22 years who could go from being Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM, Warrant Officer 1), *'top man on base, much lorded and feared'* and top of their profession, and the next day they would be on the council house waiting list.

On the contrary, others left things until the last minute and then struggled to adapt, having too many issues to address at once, including finding employment, but also looking for accommodation and finding schools and GP surgeries, etc. A single soldier on camp had needed help with finding housing. He said everything was a challenge and an *'uphill battle'*. He eventually decided to relocate to be closer to family. These findings correspond with the literature on veterans more generally, which showed that those who do not have a good transition and find problems in adjusting to civilian life also have difficulties with finding employment, managing their finances, securing accommodation and maintaining their health (Stern, 2015).

Upskilling

Although the literature on the skills and qualifications of SNCOs is mixed, some research from Canada suggests that a far higher proportion of Officers attained a higher education qualification, compared to NCOs and SNCOs (Van Til et al., 2016), and NCOs from the US Marine Corps had significant worries about competing for jobs with civilians with higher education qualifications (Johnston et al., 2010). A strong theme emerging from the interviews and write-in comments with SNCOs was the importance of planning well in advance for a second career, which often involved gaining new qualifications while still serving, in order to give themselves a better chance in the civilian labour market. Again, these individuals appeared to fare better on transition in terms of employment outcomes. One veteran SNCO tried to *'diversify'* before he left by undertaking health and safety and quality management

training. A female SNCO studied events management 'off her own bat' and 'topped up' her Higher National Diploma (HND) to a degree using her Enhanced Learning Credits. She had been involved in arranging a lot of events in the RAF so was building on her existing skills. She also volunteered at a number of civilian events (festivals, etc.) over the summer to gain some civilian experience before she left the Services. One Navy veteran SNCO referred to a personal development record given by the Royal Navy about 10-15 years ago: this was seen as a 'really stupid thing' at the time, but he engaged with it and he now has a full record of every course and qualification he has done and employers are 'really glad' to see this. He still keeps this record up to date.

Those who had not invested in upskilling and gaining new qualifications often struggled in the civilian world, assuming (naively) that their existing skills and experience would be an asset to civilian employers. Another veteran SNCO said that he expected to get a 'certain level' of work when he left the Royal Navy, not start at the bottom. Although his expectations were met when he initially left, he now feels he is no longer 'fresh' and that there are newer Service leavers with whom he now has to compete for roles.

Write-in comments in the survey also expanded on the issue of planning ahead and upskilling. Comments included:

- *The importance of higher education qualifications before or immediately after discharge should be emphasised and appropriate emphasis given.*
- *Gaining civilian qualifications from the RAF, e.g. civilian licence for aircraft engineering, rather than having to pay for and go through a full course; if the RAF offered these licences to someone completing 20 years, transition would be easier and would probably help with retention. Other qualifications could be offered relevant to the trade in question but should be to the relevant industry standards.*
- *A service which involved sitting down with a specialist from a recognised company and telling them your whole career courses, achievements and responsibilities. The specialist could then convert this into National Vocation Qualifications (NVQs), and recommend training modules to take that would fulfil the criteria of an NVQ where you were lacking, or to bump up the level of the NVQ to the next level. In other words, for a nominal cost to the soldier, and money from the Army, a transitioning soldier could walk away with an armful of NVQs based on what they had actually done during their service.*

Researching local labour markets

Even those who had upskilled and gained new qualifications were sometimes unprepared for the reality of local labour markets: these were often veteran SNCOs who had not researched the kinds of jobs available in the areas they planned to settle. One veteran SNCO had studied throughout his Army career to get better qualifications, completing a degree, Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and Certificate in Education (Cert Ed) before he resettled. For his resettlement he did a football coaching qualification, because he enjoyed it and thought he might move into that employment area. However, he added that he had not really done his homework and did not know what types of jobs he could go into or what the employability in the local area was like. Another veteran SNCO referred to a lack of understanding of the local labour market: e.g. shortages of people in a particular factory or sector. If this is known

beforehand, SNCOs could prepare and do training courses in a particular type of job. Instead, they need to rely on their '*own planning*' and managing expectations.

Expanding networks

Previous research with veterans by the current team has demonstrated that networks are very important for a successful transition and that Officers were more willing and able to draw on their wider networks than other ranks (Lyonette et al., 2018). The current research showed that many veteran SNCO participants suffered from a loss of camaraderie and their military networks after moving into civilian life and that those who invested early in developing new networks seemed to do better. Although one SNCO missed the Service camaraderie and the people he used to work with, he has filled his time with other things. He is volunteering, has started doing a sport he has never done, has immersed himself in the local community and made civilian friends. He still goes to an Armed Forces breakfast club which gives him his '*fix of Forces banter*'. He believes that you have to be proactive and reach out to people (he is very aware that you can end up isolated).

Other veteran SNCOs described the isolation of leaving the Forces and difficulties in making new friends and expanding their networks. One female veteran SNCO had been medically discharged: '*...Used to being with my section/platoon – all of a sudden you are on your own and have nobody and you feel really isolated. I have really struggled with that – am in a normal town but I don't really have anyone I can connect with as I don't feel like I have anything in common with them. I miss the banter I had with people I worked with, catching up over coffee. It's not the same, you lose all of that*'. This isolation has affected her mental health quite badly and her anxiety and depression have increased. As a result of this she '*made a decision about 6 months ago to cut all ties with everybody as I was struggling as they were getting on and doing things and going places that I would have been doing and it was just too much for me. So I ended up cutting all ties with everybody as I don't want to know. It just upsets me*'.

When asked for suggestions for change, write-in survey comments included comments about expanding networks, both for making new friends but also for employment-related purposes:

- *How to network, build a network and use social media to support job hunting;*
- *Networking with veterans and local businesses prior to leaving; and*
- *More industry networking opportunities hosted on base.*

4.4 Challenges in planning ahead

Not wanting to let go

There was a common theme running through the qualitative data that a large number of SNCOs are unprepared for transition from the Services because they do not want to leave ('*head in the sand mentality*'). A Navy veteran SNCO said that lots of SNCOs were not prepared mentally to leave but that it was crucial to prepare yourself to leave and commit to do so. Stakeholders interviewed as part of the research (including employers and representatives of military charities) told us that SNCOs do not engage with the transition process early enough: there is a mentality of '*the guys need me*'; they are also fiercely loyal

and committed to the Services but have to leave as they have come to the end of their contracts, even though many do not want to go.

Further challenges for SNCOs in planning ahead are described in more detail in Section 5.

4.5 Summing up

One of the key issues for SNCOs in the pre-resettlement phase is a lack of planning ahead, with those who plan appearing to do better during and after transition, in terms of settling into an area, gaining employment and expanding networks. Planning includes a degree of self-motivation and detailed research, allowing time to gain a greater knowledge of local labour markets and what kinds of jobs are available, buying or renting a house in the local area, gaining additional skills and qualifications while still in the Services and starting to build up external networks well in advance of leaving. Not all of those who had gained new qualifications while in the Services had researched local labour markets, meaning that they still encountered difficulties in finding suitable jobs when they left. Others were unprepared for a drop in status or salary when they left (see also Section 6.3). Other issues which caused problems included an inability by veteran SNCOs to accept that they had to leave the Services. The survey data showed that Army veteran SNCOs were those least likely to leave voluntarily of all the Services, and that the more senior ranks are also less likely to leave voluntarily.

The following two case studies introduce a series of individual studies of veteran SNCOs from different Services who were interviewed as part of the research. Each exemplify particular issues faced by a majority of veteran SNCOs when transitioning from the Armed Forces.

Case study 1

Background and current circumstances
A veteran RN CPO in his 60s who left the Armed Forces in 1999. He is married with grown-up children and is living in Plymouth. He is not currently working, but is signed on at the job centre and is looking for work. He has been unemployed since January 2018; however, he refers to himself as ' <i>semi-retired</i> ' as he finds this more palatable. More recently, he has been employed on a series of short-term contracts.
Aspirations on leaving the Armed Forces
When he left he was looking for a full-time job with equivalent pay to his RN role (because he had three young children still at school). Even though he was on good money when he was in the RN he still struggled to pay the mortgage (his wife was not working). He said that his ideal job on leaving would have been an IT role in an engineering industry.
Support received from the military
He started his resettlement 2 years before he left; however, he left when the MOD was in the midst of changing the resettlement process and he ended up on the old, rather than the new, route. Consequently, he did not do the career transition workshop (which was only offered on the new route). He did however do a 4-week IT course which was useful for getting a job. On the plus side, he said that his last role was ideal to resettle from (he was working with contractors and got offered a short six-month contract with them so he had something to go to when he left the RN). He said he would have liked more support from the military when he left.

He also described how when he left he went to the pay office, had his ID card cut up in front of him and 'off you go on your own'.

Challenges experienced

Money has been a particular worry. Although he already owned a home before he left the RN, which was an advantage, his partner was not working and he was worried about whether they would have enough money to live on. He also found that as an unemployed veteran you get very little financial support because you have a pension (which is viewed as an income). Since leaving he has moved from job to job and been made redundant several times. He has had to re-skill and reinvent himself which '*wears you down*'. He has also struggled to translate his skills and experience into a civilian workplace and to adjust to a civilian working environment where you have to be careful what you say. Not having a good support network around him and difficulty forming friendships have further added to these challenges.

SNCO-specific issues?

He felt that there are some issues that affect SNCOs more than others, but found it hard to put his finger on what exactly. He felt that expectations around job/type of work is an issue. In the military you are used to having a lot of responsibility as an SNCO and just getting on with things, but it doesn't work like this in the outside world. He said that you can't just tell someone to do something as they will question why and who you are to tell them that. However, he felt that some issues impact all veterans, not just SNCOs.

Suggestions for change/advice for other SNCOs

He said it would be useful to have a mentor or support from people who have previously left the Armed Forces when transitioning. He also commented that it would be better if support was offered, rather than having to request it, because veterans often feel they should be self-sufficient and shouldn't need support.

Case study 2

Background and current circumstances

G is a 49-year old married veteran who joined the Army in 1994 and left after 24 years of service (end of contract). Currently employed full-time but has had a number of jobs since leaving the military. He is happy at home but the biggest challenge for him has been the boredom factor. In civilian life, he gets '*itchy feet*'. He thinks this may be because he has not found the right role yet.

Aspirations on leaving the Armed Forces

He didn't rule anything out when he left the military, but he didn't have any direction either. His wife was working and he had his pension, so financially they were ok. However, he said the thought of not having a job kept him awake at night for several months before he left the military. He recognised that he had lots of qualifications and his CV looked good (he had not left school with many qualifications, so valued those he had gained during his time in the military). Given his background and training, he decided to stay in the work he knew.

Support received from the military

He used 4 weeks to attend the free CTP workshops and 4 weeks to do some work experience with a voluntary non-governmental organisation. As a result of advice, he used a range of job websites and got alerts from the civil service website regarding vacancies. The job he is currently in came up so he just applied – it was the third job he applied for and got. He said that

the CTP course was a real eye-opener; it was 20 years since his last interview so he found it hard to learn different interview techniques and CV writing. His friends and wife were really helpful in writing and providing feedback on his CV. He says that the support you receive significantly impacts on your outcome and that you need to be fairly switched on to ensure a good outcome, a good transition.

Challenges experienced

Leaving the Army was an emotional challenge; the military was all he had known for 22 years and leaving was quite daunting. He had a safety net of having a home and stable relationship with his wife, who was in a well-paid job. The flipside, however, was anger – the fact that he was moving away from the discipline and having to put up with people who didn't treat him with respect. He said it was also good to get away from institutionalisation – there was some bitterness about life in military but for the most part he enjoyed the job. He misses some aspects of military life, but it was the right time to leave as it was getting to the point where he was becoming disillusioned.

SNCO-specific issues?

He said '*SNCOs are detached from normal life for so long. So you don't understand what is acceptable in terms of body language. ... The longer you are in the Armed Forces the more narrow-minded you can become. The tolerance levels for what you deem to be appropriate are not what they should be.*' SNCOs have a direct approach to doing things which can be an advantage, but can also be seen as being inflexible. He thinks that SNCOs have qualities that should be appreciated by employers, but they are often not recognised. SNCOs need training to blend in – to be a '*grey man*'.

Suggestions for change/advice for other SNCOs

In the last 2 years of his service, he started preparing for civilian life by keeping an eye on newspapers and cutting out adverts. He created a scrap book of ideas – this was helpful as it gave him an idea of what qualifications are needed, salary levels and experience that employers are looking for. This helped shaped his expectations, even those which contradicted the advice he was given during resettlement. What would have been most helpful was being able to bounce ideas off people and having a key link person. The key link person from the CTP, he said, looks after lots of people so help is not very personalised or regular.

5. The importance of resettlement

Summary of findings

- Male SNCOs and those with greater seniority were more likely to value resettlement support more than two years before leaving; younger veteran SNCOs would value support more than two years after leaving.
- A common difficulty for SNCOs, especially those in more senior and demanding, responsible roles, was getting the time to do their resettlement courses, especially if they had an unsupportive Commanding Officer.
- There were some differences by Service, seniority, gender and age in the type of support received and also in satisfaction levels with resettlement courses.
- Many veteran SNCOs felt that the CTP courses were too generic and not tailored enough to individuals, and that more senior SNCOs did not get enough support, either in terms of length of courses or content. Some called for WOs to receive the same extensive support as Officers.
- There were several complaints that the advice given to SNCOs before leaving did not match with reality (e.g. that they would walk into good middle management roles).
- Difficulties arose for some SNCOs in not being able to do their resettlement courses in the area in which they had chosen to live after leaving and also that they were unprepared for transition.
- Employers and mentors were seen as an important resource for SNCOs: it was felt that employers should be more engaged with veteran SNCOs before and during the resettlement process, and mentors from a similar background would be helpful in providing realistic advice for those about to leave.

5.1 Introduction

The previous section has already demonstrated some of the difficulties for SNCOs in making a successful transition, focusing on planning well in advance of the resettlement phase. We now turn to the two years before transition, when the resettlement process begins for eligible serving personnel. Additional challenges arise during this period, which will be outlined here in more detail.

CTP resettlement support

In order to contextualise the resettlement phase, we begin by outlining the CTP offering for eligible SNCOs. It should be noted that CTP support is bespoke to an individual's needs and not automatically tied to their rank. The package available to SNCOs is as follows (assuming they have served more than 6 years):

Individual careers advice

As a Full Support Programme client, SNCOs are allocated a personal Career Consultant, who is accessible throughout their resettlement. They work with them to develop a Personal Resettlement Plan (PRP) - a timetable of actions designed to help them find a job or develop a career. The Career Consultant explains the benefits of attending CTP events and can also advise on training or trial attachments. They are available as often as required, by appointment.

Workshops to ease the transition

CTP offers a wide range of Core and Follow-On Workshops which are free to registered Service leavers.

Core workshops

- Career Transition Workshop (CTW) – this workshop lasts three days and includes marketing skills, CV writing and interview techniques. SNCOs can attend any one of the following CTWs: SNCOs only, Officer/SNCO mixed, all rank mixed workshop.
- Self-Employment Awareness - the one-day Self-Employment Awareness Workshop is operated by X-Forces on behalf of the CTP. The aim of the day is to explore self-employment as an option for resettlement and to look at what needs to be considered if they want to explore this further.
- New Horizons in Retirement – a one-day workshop which looks at retirement as an active stage of career development (this is useful if SNCOs are intending to retire or work only part-time, but want to stay active). Spouses or partners can also attend.

Follow-on workshops

- Interview Techniques – a one-day workshop which uses role-playing to build on the techniques learned in the CTW.
- Management Consultancy – this workshop looks at what is needed to become a successful manager or technical consultant, whether employed or self-employed.
- CV Development - this workshop provides guidance on CV development, and how SNCOs' CV will fit within the employment market.
- FAR - the Financial Aspects of Resettlement (FAR) briefings provide generic financial advice from a qualified Financial Advisor.
- Final Approach - for Service leavers who are within the last four months prior to discharge.

Enhancement webinars

- Social Media - an interactive webinar to expand understanding and knowledge on the use of social media and online networking in resettlement.
- CV Development - an interactive webinar to refresh and enhance knowledge of CV best practice.

- Interview Success - an interactive webinar designed to enhance the aspects of interview best practice.
- Interim Management, Contracting and Consultancy - an interactive webinar to help understand the challenge of selling expertise on an independent basis.
- Managing Your New Career - an interactive webinar to prepare for the long term vision of a new career.

Vocational training and courses

The CTP offers a range of vocational training courses covering Management, Electrical Engineering and IT qualifications together with Building Trades skills. All courses have been approved by the MOD.

There is a comprehensive selection of courses on offer: some are delivered within the MOD contract (called Contract Funded training) which are deducted directly from an Individual Resettlement Training Costs (IRTC) Grant. Others can be funded using remaining IRTC funding or Enhanced Learning Credits Scheme funding if the course is at Level 3 or above (called Non-Contract Funded training). The Resettlement Training Centre (RTC) in Aldershot is the main training site but other CTP Centres and external venues throughout the UK deliver classroom and workshop-based training.

CTP RightJob

CTP RightJob is the CTP's online job finding service, listing thousands of live vacancies for Service leavers from local, national and international employers (CTP works with hundreds of organisations). The jobs board is only accessible by Service leavers and veterans.

Employment fairs

The CTP hosts nine Employment Fairs each year, where they bring together employers looking to hire the skills of those leaving the Services. These are free to attend and SNCOs can attend as many as they wish.

Company Events

The CTP organises Online Chat Events and physical Company Presentations across the UK every year. These provide an opportunity for Service leavers to network with potential employers and to find out about different sectors. As well as checking out the opportunities available, SNCOs can find out what qualifications are needed by industry and gain an insight into civilian employment.

It is clear that there are a variety of employment-related courses, workshops and events available to SNCOs prior to leaving. The following sections focus on some of the issues arising from the quantitative and qualitative data relating to resettlement.

Adequate time for resettlement and an appropriate role before leaving

Questions were asked in the survey about the right length of time to receive resettlement advice and support before leaving the Armed Forces. Table 5.1 breaks this down by Service and rank, whereas differences by gender and age are reported in more detail in the Appendix (Table A2.6).

A large proportion (55.3%) of more senior veteran SNCOs would value support more than two years before leaving, compared with 45.2% of less senior veteran SNCOs. Men were also more likely to value extended pre-transition support than women (50.2% v 36.8%), whereas women were more likely than men to value support at around the time of leaving. Navy veteran SNCOs were also more likely than those from the other two Services to value support around the time of leaving, but younger veteran SNCOs were more likely to value support more than two years after leaving (34.6%). These findings suggest that the greater the seniority, the more likely that veteran SNCOs will require a longer period of support before leaving, whereas younger veteran SNCOs (likely to be those who had left more recently) required ongoing help beyond the two years of CTP support. This ongoing support is currently available via RFEA, but SNCOs need to engage with the support available and may be reluctant to do so.

Table 5.1: Percentage reporting when support was best received by type, service branch and seniority (multiple options possible)

	Service (%)			Level of SNCO		Total
	Navy	Army	RAF	More senior	Less senior	
More than 2 years before leaving	46.9	50.1	46.3	55.3	45.2	49.0
1-2 years before leaving	46.9	40.8	51.2	37.6	47.2	43.6
6-12 months before leaving	25.9	20.6	28.1	18.1	25.5	22.7
1 to 5 months before leaving; around the time of leaving	24.7	10.7	16.5	9.7	15.9	13.6
1 to 5 months after leaving; 6-12 months after leaving	22.2	14.4	17.4	13.9	17.2	16.0
1-2 years after leaving	32.1	21.3	25.6	19.8	25.8	23.5
more than 2 years after leaving	24.7	20.2	17.4	20.3	20.2	20.2
Responses	81	431	121	237	396	633

The free text survey comments supported the findings above, often emphasising the need for support to be ongoing, but also to be more relevant to the civilian world. Many commented in the survey and interviews that, as SNCOs, they were unable to take their full two years' resettlement, either due to the responsibilities of their role, because they were deployed prior to leaving or because their Chain of Command would not allow or made it difficult for them to do so.

One SNCO started resettlement while he was abroad. With just a short time to go before he left, he was posted to a very high profile post in Cyprus. At that time he did not think that it was going to end. He was '*going through resettlement things at the same time that [he was] responsible for all the air assets in a minor war*'. When he returned from Cyprus the posting he was going back to had disappeared. They were cutting jobs in the UK and there was no

slot in his area for him (someone else at the same rank was resettling in the same area and they got the next closest slot). As a result he took whatever posting he could and ended up isolated from his family for his final tour: '*...simmering resentment that the promise of 'we'll get you posted to where you intend to settle, we'll help you', was just rubbish, all ignored*'. Any job he wanted was in Scotland and it was a frustrating 6-12 months. In describing his situation at that time he said '*You drink more, as you live in a mess amongst a load of other sad lonely individuals...you're not working on your career anymore because it's finishing*'. Findings from the literature also showed that those who struggle with transition and are unable to adjust also have greater difficulties maintaining their health, with many turning to substance abuse (Stern, 2015).

Other veteran SNCOs described problems with time and the ability to take their full two years' resettlement. One told us that his Chain of Command prevented him from starting his resettlement process as early as he would have liked. There was pressure for him to move dates for courses because they clashed with military exercises (this was despite explaining that as they were civilian courses the dates cannot be changed). On reflection he would have started his resettlement earlier and taken more recognisable qualifications such as driving and adventure training instructor qualifications. Another SNCO had a similar experience: before leaving, he was put into a man management role in a training establishment where he was required 24 hours a day, '*dealing with young kids making the transition to come into the forces - sometimes they are not very good at it!*' That all has an impact on your time. You have to do the trainees a service but that also affects your ability to plan to leave. He argued that the military could be '*more savvy*' as to where they put people, e.g. there could be two people, both in the process of leaving, doing the same job.

A write-in comment to the survey also highlighted this issue:

When leaving the Armed Forces at 22/24 year point personnel are usually in an appointment of a very busy nature due only to their success on promotion. This then has a negative effect at resettlement as rightly so is not a priority of the Regt. They need to be put into a place where they are left to do their resettlement and not overloaded and pressured to be worn down by work and then do not have time to complete personal goals. The easy answer which is always stated is that they are given time. However when trying to move a family, re-train, apply for multiple jobs, etc. having to work 12 hrs a day does not help.

These recognised problems highlight the need for targeted support for more senior SNCOs who have greater responsibility within the Services and are therefore more at risk of not receiving their full two years' resettlement, either because of their own loyalty and commitment or because their Chain of Command is unwilling to release them. An appropriate 'transition' role (or a shared role) may help in this phase of resettlement.

5.2 Perceptions of resettlement courses

Support received

Previous research, which prompted the commissioning of the current research, highlighted that the CTP resettlement package gives SNCOs less confidence than other groups of veterans in their ability to secure employment (Kantar Futures, 2017). Detailed tables showing

the percentages of those receiving support by type of support on offer, by Service, level of seniority, gender and age, are included in the Appendices (Tables A2.7 and A2.8).

Nearly all veteran SNCOs reported that they had received support on careers advice and guidance (99.2%), information on employment (89.2%), information on education/training opportunities (89.6%) and funding for further education and training (86.0%). They were much less likely to report that they had received mentoring/coaching support (59.8%), information on volunteering (68.2%) or self-employment (64.5%). Older veteran SNCOs were less likely than younger veteran SNCOs to have received training and support, perhaps reflecting time since leaving and the changes that have been implemented in more recent years.

More senior veteran SNCOs were more likely than less senior veteran SNCOs to have received funding for further education and/or retraining (90.0% v 83.4%) and also for the majority of other types of support.

Veteran SNCOs in the Army were more likely than those in the other Services to report that they had received information and training on becoming self-employed, but slightly less likely to report that they had received information on careers advice and guidance, information on employment opportunities and funding for further education and/or retraining. These figures are likely to reflect individual veteran SNCOs' engagement with the various types of support on offer, which could suggest an unwillingness by SNCOs to engage, a lack of communication of what is on offer by their units, or an unwillingness by the Chain of Command to allow SNCOs to attend resettlement courses, as previously highlighted.

Satisfaction with support received

All survey participants and interviewees were then asked several questions on their perceptions of the support received and any suggestions for the future of resettlement training. In terms of satisfaction with support received, the following findings distinguish between rank, Service, gender and age.

Levels of satisfaction overall were highest for links to local networks of veterans (38.4%) and mentoring/coaching (32.8%)¹¹. There were differences by Service, with RAF veteran SNCOs recording lower satisfaction than other veteran SNCOs with a variety of support offered. Less senior SNCO veterans reported higher satisfaction than more senior veteran SNCOs with mentoring and/or coaching (36.0% v 28.2%) but lower satisfaction with information on employment opportunities (24.2% v 31.0%). Younger veteran SNCOs were also more satisfied than older veteran SNCOs with a variety of support offered (apart from funding for further education and/or retraining), which may reflect changes to the types of support offered in more recent years. In terms of gender differences, the percentage satisfied is generally

¹¹ Responses were grouped into the following: satisfied (very satisfied or satisfied); neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; dissatisfied (dissatisfied or very dissatisfied).

lower for women than for men (apart from volunteering opportunities or the Volunteer Reserve Force: 30.8% of women were satisfied v 20.1% of men)¹².

The findings suggest that RAF veteran SNCOs, less senior SNCOs, younger veteran SNCOs and female veteran SNCOs all had lower satisfaction with a variety of support received than their comparator groups. High levels of satisfaction with links to networks of veterans and with mentoring and coaching suggest that these are important sources of support and reflect some of the later findings regarding the importance of mentoring (see Section 5.4).

(Tables with further details are provided in the Appendices, Tables A2.9 and A2.10).

Content and length of courses

In spite of the wide-ranging CTP offering, previous research on self-employment among the Armed Forces Community found that participants often found the CTP resettlement courses too generic and not tailored enough to individual needs (Lyonette et al., 2018). The following comments support this finding and are typical of those in the survey and comments from the interviews. There were comments which suggested that more senior SNCOs should receive more support to reflect their length of service and their seniority, similar to that offered to Officers (it should be noted from Section 5.2.1 that some of the CTP workshops were offered as SNCOs only, Officer/SNCO mixed, or an all rank mixed workshop, but comments suggested that many SNCOs wanted a more bespoke or extensive offering):

- *Due to the amount of personnel leaving, the career transition workshops are heavily subscribed and cover a multitude of skills and experience. I believe there should be one for JNCOs, SNCOs and Officers. This should help (to a certain extent) focus on careers post the services.*
- *I thought it was quite poor and was focused on the Private leaving the forces rather than a WO1. WO2 and WO1s should be on the Officers course.*

Other survey participants focused their comments more upon the content of the courses, suggesting that limited suggestions for jobs in civilian life were provided, and usually focused upon the jobs that SNCOs were already doing (however, this was drawn out as a positive approach by some of the interviewees who realised later that they should have concentrated on developing their existing skills and experience within a civilian environment, rather than looking for something for which they had no experience)¹³:

- *Very poor. Two choices, driving or security!*

¹² Other studies have shown that women leave the Regulars to join the Reserves once they have children to better manage their work-life balance (Fisher et al., 2015).

¹³ RFEA experiences with SNCOs show that they are far more likely to be successful when using their skills from the military to get a job that is similar, even if this is not what the SNCO really wants to do.

- *Overall I was happy with my resettlement package, but I felt that the adviser tried pushing me towards a similar job that I had in the Army despite explaining that I wanted a change.*

One female SNCO who was interviewed commented upon the male-dominated focus of the courses and the jobs suggested for civilian employment:

- *'Lots of information was geared toward male soldiers leaving the Army. Lots of speakers coming in saying, 'why don't you become a builder, why don't you go and work on an oil rig'. It was not relevant to me and really frustrating....the assumption is that you will become a builder and lift things or become a close protection officer – all physical stuff'.*

Write-in survey comments also highlighted some dissatisfaction with the length of support for SNCOs who have often been in the Armed Forces for a considerable length of time:

- *Not enough, two weeks resettlement training after 26 years was severely inadequate.*
- *The courses should be compulsory within weeks of either signing off or being in last 2 years. With units unable to make soldiers do it when it suits them. Otherwise advice comes too late to act on.*
- *Long-term career soldiers have been institutionalised for decades and then are expected to become civilians overnight. Speak civilian. Write civilian. Act civilian. It doesn't happen. Soldiers really struggle to sell themselves because in service life it's done via actions not a pen, so having an effective CV is a major milestone, having good interview technique is another.*

The comments above and the survey data suggest that CTP courses should be more tailored, rather than a 'one size fits all' approach. However, there are obvious resource limitations which are likely to limit the case for tailored support for all leavers. The length of time that more senior SNCOs have served and their particular skillset in the management of large groups of service personnel suggests that they may require greater targeting in the resettlement process than other groups, however. Female SNCOs may also require a more targeted programme of support when leaving, as they may have different aspirations regarding life after the Services, and entry into male-dominated sectors and roles may not be suitable or desired. Courses could be made mandatory, meaning that the Chain of Command is unable to put undue pressure on individuals not to attend courses, and that SNCOs cannot choose whether or not to attend (the CTP offering is wide-ranging and some SNCOs, especially those reluctant to leave, may simply choose not to attend some potentially valuable courses and workshops, meaning that their perceptions are based on limited experience). Comments also suggest that support should perhaps begin earlier and continue after the two-year period post-transition¹⁴.

¹⁴ CTP advice continues to 2 years post-discharge but if veterans are struggling they will be allocated to the Future Horizons programme operated by RFEA (RFEA support is available for life, but veterans need to engage with what is on offer).

Managing expectations

A common theme arising from all data sources was a mis-match between SNCOs' expectations and the reality of the civilian labour market. Many participants discussed the fact that they had expected to walk into a good job after leaving but this proved not to be the case for a variety of reasons (see also Section 6). While some veteran SNCOs commented on a certain 'arrogance' among SNCOs in expecting a good middle-management job after leaving, others blamed the MOD for not providing enough information on the reality of what to expect in the civilian labour market. When asked what would help in transition, write-in comments to the survey included:

- *Being told the truth for a start, having career advice 4 years before I left so that I could get the experience necessary to get a civilian job.*
- *Careers advisors having a realistic grasp of the job market and not leading people into a false sense of security.*

Location of courses

Several write-in survey comments and the interviews related to the lack of provision of resettlement courses in the area in which SNCOs planned to live after leaving, which meant that there was a level of disconnect between the advice being provided in one area and the realities of the labour market in another. Examples included:

- *[Want to be] able to take courses in your home town area where you live.*
- *I did all my training and investigation about jobs in [town], but settled in [another town] where the prospective job world are worlds apart.*

Some consideration of the likely location of SNCOs post-discharge would lead to better access to local labour market information, allowing Serving personnel to research the kinds of jobs available and whether their skills and experience provide a good match. Practical and realistic advice on the kinds of jobs available to SNCOs would also seem to be important in planning for transition.

The following section highlights the important role of employers, beginning with an overview of the Armed Forces Covenant.

5.3 The role of employers

The Armed Forces Covenant

The Armed Forces Covenant was implemented as part of the Armed Forces Act (2006, 2011) and recognises that the nation has a responsibility to those who serve, have served, their families and the bereaved. It has two principles: 'that members of the Armed Forces community should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services; and that special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given the most such as the injured or the bereaved' (Ministry of Defence, 2016).

Within business, employers can sign-up to the covenant and commit to supporting their employees who are reservists and veterans as ‘a forces-friendly employer’ by pledging to: ‘support the employment of veterans and service leavers; offer flexibility in leave for service spouses and partners before, during and after deployment; support reservist employees, allowing leave for training and deployment; and/or offer discount to members of the Armed Forces community’ (Armed Forces Covenant website, 2020). In practice, this means that employers could work with the CTP and recruit veterans, guarantee job interviews to veterans, support the employment of veterans, and recognise military skills and qualifications. For partners and spouses, employers can pledge to support those who may have to move with their partner, guarantee job interviews, and consider holiday requests sympathetically.

By signing the Armed Forces Covenant, employers have the opportunity to be recognised by the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) by achieving a bronze, silver or gold award:

- Bronze award holders pledge to support the Armed Forces community.
- Silver award holders have positive policies and proactively demonstrate that members of the Armed Forces community are not unfairly disadvantaged as part of their recruitment and selection processes, support reservists and employ at least one member of the Armed Forces community.
- Gold award holders will also proactively demonstrate forces-friendly recruitment and selection processes, engage with CTP, be registered on the Forces Families Jobs portal, be an exemplar in the sector for advocating support to Armed Forces members, and provide 10 days’ leave for reservists.

In 2019, it was reported that over 4,000 organisations had signed the Armed Forces Covenant (Ministry of Defence, 2019). To support successful transitions to civilian life, the Office for Veteran Affairs was created to coordinate government policy on veteran affairs including mental and physical health, education and employment, in addition to internship programmes and veteran support networks (Ministry of Defence, 2019).

The views of veterans

Many veteran SNCOs felt that employers should be more proactive in the transition process, working with the military and providing help and advice on available jobs and skills required, as well as providing work placements and shadowing in the 6-12 months prior to leaving. This could ensure a ‘win-win’ in that employers would learn to understand the skills and experience of SNCOs more clearly, while also providing information and advice to SNCOs about to transition on the kinds of jobs available and how they can adapt their CVs to fit those roles. For example, write-in comments from the survey suggested:

- *Being released from my unit to attend employment events/training etc. Being allowed to have work experience attachments with a civilian employer.*
- *Possible job placement / work experience in last 6 months of service as part of a package.*

One veteran SNCO said that having people from industry come in to provide advice was useful. For example, BT recently held an Armed Forces day in London for ex-forces BT

employees. He found out that BT Openreach is the biggest employer of veterans in the country (he didn't know this before). He added that knowing you have military people around you in the workplace seems like a good option and it would have been helpful to know this earlier.

5.4 The role of mentors

Comments from interviews included other suggestions for change. Many referred to the importance of mentors, particularly for SNCOs who may need additional support from people they respect who have already gone through transition (the status and recognition of the most senior SNCOs within the military might mean that any such mentors should come from the same or a similar rank). Stakeholders also commented that SNCOs would benefit from mentors from a similar background and that the CTP should focus more upon just getting them a job but also monitor their progress over a longer period (e.g. sending a CTP advisor out six months after they have left to see how they are getting on).

Many of the interviewees and the write-in comments in the survey referred to the need for mentors. One interviewee said mentoring schemes were important: having mentors within organisations to help you prepare for going outside. He added that they do have mentors in the Forces, but there is '*not a lot of formality to it – a more laid down process*' would be better to capture everybody, rather than a few.

Another veteran SNCO suggested bringing in veterans to talk to those about to transition, and say '*it's going to be like this. You are going to feel anxiety, separation anxiety; you are going to feel lonely; you are going to have to moderate your language, your behaviour. Your ideas have to change slightly to fit, as people are not used to, and will not accept, some of the behaviours, thoughts and the way you react too; things have to be different*'. He added that this needs to come from a senior experienced veteran SNCO, someone who has made it but failed (maybe even fired from a job) and explain how it affected them. This would appear to be an important (and possibly untapped) resource, as ex-SNCO volunteers could be invited in on a regular basis to talk to small groups of those about to transition, providing recent practical advice.

5.5 Summing up

Section 5 outlines the evidence relating to the resettlement phase, i.e. up to two years before Serving personnel leave the military. A number of challenges were highlighted during this phase which could have an important bearing on making a successful transition into civilian life. There were some identified differences by gender, seniority and age in the length of time that veteran SNCOs would value resettlement support, e.g. men and more senior SNCOs would value support more than two years before leaving, and younger veteran SNCOs would value support more than two years after leaving, suggesting a need for more extended support than the current offering, at least for particular groups of veteran SNCOs.

A lack of time to resettle and a demanding and responsible role prior to leaving were commonly cited difficulties, with SNCOs finding it difficult to take the time to do their resettlement courses, especially if they had an unsupportive Chain of Command.

There were some differences in support received by age and seniority and differences by Service and seniority with satisfaction levels (e.g. RAF veteran SNCOs generally recorded lower satisfaction than other veteran SNCOs and more senior veteran SNCOs reported lower satisfaction than less senior veteran SNCOs with mentoring and/or coaching but higher satisfaction with information on employment opportunities). Younger veteran SNCOs were generally more satisfied than older veteran SNCOs with a variety of support offered and women less satisfied overall than men.

In spite of the extensive CTP offering, there were many comments about the content and quality of CTP courses, with a common thread being that they were either too generic for SNCOs or that they were not long enough, especially for those who had spent a long period of time in the military. Other issues related to the location of resettlement courses, as some veteran SNCOs were unable to do the courses in the area in which they had chosen to resettle, meaning that they were ill-informed about local labour market opportunities and therefore relatively unprepared for civilian employment.

Other difficulties included a lack of practical information, the need for employer engagement and support, and the military not providing realistic advice on job opportunities in the civilian world. Mentors appeared to be highly valued by many veteran SNCOs, especially mentors who had been in a similar position and could provide realistic advice, not only on employment opportunities but also on how transition and isolation can negatively affect veteran SNCOs.

The following case study provides an example of a veteran SNCO, including his experiences with the resettlement courses and his struggles with matching his skills and experience to civilian employment and with mental health issues.

Case study 3

Background and current circumstances
L left the Army as a Warrant Officer in 2018 after serving for 25 years. He is partnered with no children and has just started working full-time as a site operations manager on a temporary contract. Previously, his girlfriend's mother had helped to get him a job painting and litter-picking, etc.: <i>'not using my brain'</i> , but he stayed for 9 months. His girlfriend then introduced him to a professional CV writer who re-wrote his CV, his girlfriend helped sort out his LinkedIn profile, and he then received job offers. He started at a supermarket in January 2019 (permanent nights and 34 minutes commute from his home which wasn't ideal); he left this post in August after 8 months and has just started his new role which is Monday to Friday so much better than before.
Aspirations on leaving the Armed Forces
He had thought about project management, property maintenance, or possibly <i>'an engineer for sound'</i> . He added that he had <i>'scoped it out'</i> but <i>'I didn't know what to do'</i> . None of these options were linked to his work in the Army. His professional CV writer later said that he should <i>'play to his strengths'</i> and suggested logistics, etc. which he knew about from the Army. This was <i>'just not pointed out'</i> to him during resettlement, e.g. <i>'you do this now so why not do this?'</i>
Support received from the military

The CTP CV writing course was full of people from different backgrounds: *'didn't pitch it at the right people'*. He found his tutor unhelpful: *'Any job I fancied was pooh-poohed'* and he *'walked out of there more demoralised'*. He *'gleaned more information'* from a couple of job fairs and an insight day for project management where he realised as a result of the course that this wasn't for him (which was useful).

He said that the CTP should use different people's backgrounds as an advantage but it needs to be tailored towards those who have been in for a long time, starting with practical advice, e.g. opening a bank account, mortgage advice, etc. Some advice is available but often not in the right location. *'Even computer confidence, step-by-step'*. His career advisor was helpful but always busy. The property maintenance course was well-run (*'civvies from the trade'*, e.g. plumbing, plastering, etc.; *'all very knowledgeable, no airs and graces, not a military-style course'*). However, getting on a course and getting paid is too complicated and may put some people off. He knew some SNCOs who were unsure about joining the gas-fitting course which was popular but expensive. *'CTP works if you know what you want to do and you're pretty much already a civvy'* (e.g. the RAF – *'civvies in uniform anyway'*). *'Guys like me don't know anything'*. L emphasised that all of his hard work developing his CV and finding employment after the military, he did on his own. The support received from the military and CTP was not helpful in his transition to the civilian labour market.

Any work-related challenges experienced?

None of his qualifications from the Services could be used in civvy street. *'Nobody wants a weapons instructor, do they?'* *'Nothing went smooth, I was spinning more plates than a juggler in a circus'*. At his review at the supermarket chain his boss said that he should look busier: *'I've been in life and death situations; if someone is missing their coleslaw for a day...'* The Army is not 9-5. Also in civvy street nobody thanks you.

Any other challenges?

L was diagnosed with PTSD last year (depression and anxiety) and has been seeing a clinical psychologist who put him in touch with Walking with the Wounded (9 months support); they helped him with a job application for Amazon but his lack of a degree meant that he was unable to get this job – he didn't see the point of getting a degree to move boxes around.

Any SNCO-specific issues?

SNCOs are accustomed to a certain way of *'having things done for you'* which is very difficult to get out of. *'It's funny and sad at the same time...back at the bottom shovelling shit'*. SNCOs can see a problem forming before it's revealed and can adjust and adapt...*'learn to move your troops in line with your thinking'*. Civvies don't delegate like SNCOs (*'you have to trust the people below you'*) and praising people is not normal in the civilian world. *'A lot of people struggle with this'* and end up going into similar organisations to the Army (e.g. rigs, close protection, etc.: *'large masculine teams'*). *'Everything is done for you'* in the military. CTP do provide a book on resettlement *'but it doesn't sink in...everyday living is never explained to you'* and SNCOs have to find out through word of mouth. They may take out only one piece from the information provided.

Suggestions for change/advice for other SNCOs

He suggested a dedicated clerk for resettlement: someone knowledgeable who can help with forms, *'someone to lean on'*. *'Just working out your leave is hard enough'*. Some work experience pre-transition would be really helpful (not necessarily to do anything, just to see how people interact, e.g. no swearing).

6. Making the move

Summary of findings

- 'Success' in transition, as defined by the SNCOs, is related to job satisfaction and enjoyment, as well as having a better work-life balance, but also having enough money to survive.
- The most useful support on making the transition was support from family and friends; financial security and personal characteristics were also ranked highly by respondents, whereas support from Armed Forces transition services was only ranked highly by 10% of respondents.
- RAF veteran SNCOs were more likely than veteran SNCOs in other Services to report that a raft of skills, learned through their time in service, helped them in making the transition.
- Female veteran SNCOs appeared to rate their skills more poorly overall than male SNCOs, particularly their ability to promote themselves and presentation skills, good networks/networking skills and digital/IT skills.
- Almost a third of participants in the survey reported available jobs not matching current salary to be challenging.
- RAF veteran SNCOs found fewer issues to be challenging than other veteran SNCOs. Army veteran SNCOs found a lack of interview experience/skills to be very challenging, as well as negative attitudes from potential employers. Navy veteran SNCOs found an inability to sell themselves well to an employer to be challenging, higher than other veteran SNCOs.
- Male veteran SNCOs were more likely than female veteran SNCOs to find a lack of support from the Armed Forces transition services, negative attitudes from potential employers, and a lack of relevant skills and qualifications, all to be extremely or very challenging when seeking work, as well as available jobs not matching current skills. Female veteran SNCOs were more likely than male veteran SNCOs to report a lack of self-confidence, lack of interview experience/skills, inability to sell themselves well to a potential employer, and mental health issues, as challenging.
- Younger veteran SNCOs overall found these issues to be more challenging than older veteran SNCOs.
- Mental health issues were a challenge for many when leaving the Services, and the survey highlighted that these issues were particularly challenging for female and younger veteran SNCOs.

6.1 Introduction

The previous two sections have focused upon the time spent in the military preparing for transition. Interview and survey participants were asked what they considered a successful transition: responses were synthesised into the following four items:

- Happy and content with their situation;
- Having enough money;
- Enjoying work;
- Having a good work-life balance.

The following section describes the experiences, both positive and negative, of making the move into the civilian world, and particularly into civilian employment, and how various factors either helped or hindered SNCOs' ability to make their transition successful.

6.2 Support in making the transition

Most useful support

Survey participants were asked to identify the support received in making the transition to civilian employment, how helpful that support was and what types of support worked best. Participants were asked to choose from a list of options and also to rank them in order of importance (Table 6.1):

- Support from family and friends was clearly the most important factor in helping to make the transition (308/615 respondents (50%) ranked this first); there were many write-in comments and interview data to support this finding;
- Financial security was also an important factor, ranked first by 92 respondents (15%) and second by 125 respondents (20%); although veteran SNCOs did not expect to make more money than they had earned while in the Services, they were often at a stage in life where they needed a second career to earn enough to support a family;
- Personal characteristics (determination to succeed, self-confidence and self-belief) were all ranked relatively highly by respondents (i.e. ranked in the top three);
- Support from the Armed Forces transition services was only ranked top by 22 respondents (4%) and second by 38 respondents (6%); this reflects some of the more negative comments about resettlement support highlighted in Section 5;
- Specific advice and/or training and having a mentor were ranked by very few respondents but this possibly reflects the low number of respondents receiving this support overall, as a large number of survey write-in comments highlighted the need for suitably-qualified mentors during resettlement.

Table 6.1: What things have helped you most in making the transition to civilian employment? (rank in order)

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Support from family and friends	308	95	40	76
Knowing I was financially secure/could take a financial risk?	92	125	54	38
Determination to succeed	67	77	124	116
Self-confidence	60	134	126	100
Self-belief	34	102	118	120
Support from the AF transition services	22	38	79	47
Specific advice and/or training	16	22	49	83
Having a mentor	2	13	14	25
Total	615	615	615	615

Helpful skills and competencies gained through Service

Respondents were asked to report the skills and competencies gained through being in the Armed Forces which had helped them in making the transition to civilian employment (see Tables A2.11 and A2.12 in the Appendix). Unsurprisingly, skills/competencies such as leadership (86.3%), management (82.9%), organisational skills (90.7%), team working (87.3%) and decision making (86.0%) featured highly across all three Services. At the other end of the scale, far fewer veteran SNCOs felt that they had gained marketing (5.3%) and commercial awareness skills (9.5%) whilst serving.

Some interesting differences between the Services were also evident. For example, Navy veteran SNCOs were far less likely to say they had financial awareness from their time in the Services (3.8%), when compared with the Army (17.1%) and RAF (13.3%). There were similar Service differences with commercial awareness.

Demographic differences were also evident. Women were less likely than men to mention the ability to promote themselves (33.3% v 51.1%) and presentation skills (46.2% v 73.8%), as well as good networks/networking skills (23.1% v 31.2%) and digital/IT skills (33.3% v 42.6%). Younger veteran SNCOs were slightly more likely than older veteran SNCOs to report commercial awareness (16.7%), good networks/networking skills (37.5%) and digital/IT skills (45.8%) but less likely to mention team-working skills (75.0%). Some of the findings relating to digital/IT skills could reflect greater familiarity among younger groups with IT and social media, whereas other differences by age could perhaps be explained by changes to the CTP offering over time.

More of the most senior SNCOs (55.0%) were likely than less senior SNCOs (46.9%) to report an ability to promote themselves, reflecting their level of status and respect within the Services. As will be shown (see Section 7.5.2), a loss of status on transition was an important challenge

for many veteran SNCOs over the longer-term, and this could be especially difficult for those with higher levels of seniority.

The following sections describe the challenges faced during this phase of resettlement in more detail.

6.3 Challenges faced in looking for employment

Survey participants were asked if they had faced any challenges in looking for employment after leaving the Services. Table 6.2 describes the challenges faced in looking for employment by Service and by seniority (Table A2.13 in the Appendix shows differences by gender and age).

The most common challenge for veteran SNCOs was available jobs not matching their current salary (31.9%), reflecting their need – and expectation – to earn a good salary after leaving. Overall, veteran SNCOs from the RAF found fewer issues either extremely or very challenging than veteran SNCOs in other Services, e.g. very few (9.4%) reported a lack of relevant skills and less than a fifth (18.8%) reported a lack of qualifications¹⁵. On the other hand, over a quarter (25.3%) of Army veteran SNCOs found a lack of interview experience/skills to be very challenging, as well as negative attitudes from a potential employer/employers (25.5%). Other differences by Service were evident: almost a quarter (24.7%) of Navy veteran SNCOs found an inability to sell themselves well to an employer (either in an application or in an interview) to be extremely or very challenging, higher than veteran SNCOs in the other Services.

There were few differences in seniority level, although more senior veteran SNCOs than less senior veteran SNCOs reported negative attitudes from a potential employer/employers to be a serious challenge (26.0% v 21.8%).

When comparing these responses by gender and age, even starker differences emerged: men were more likely than women to find a lack of support from the Armed Forces transition services (32.7% v 20.9%) and negative attitudes from a potential employer/employers (32.5% v 27.9%) to be extremely or very challenging when seeking work, as well as available jobs not matching current skills (37.2% v 27.9%). A lack of relevant skills (28.1% v 11.6%) and lack of relevant qualifications (31.1% v 14.0%) were also more challenging for men than women in looking for work. This may reflect differences in male and female aspirations, rather than actual differences by skills and qualifications (women were more likely to be caring for home and family or working part-time after leaving than men; see Section 7).

On the other hand, female veteran SNCOs were more likely than male veteran SNCOs to report a lack of self-confidence (23.3% v 10.6%), lack of interview experience/skills (41.9% v

¹⁵ It is difficult to ascertain if participants were answering on the basis that they did not have a lack of skills or qualifications or that they did not find a lack of skills and qualifications to be a challenge, even though there was another response option 'did not face this challenge'.

30.9%), inability to sell themselves well to potential employers (30.2% v 23.2%), and mental health issues (23.3% v 15.7%) to be challenging.

Younger veteran SNCOs overall found these issues to be more challenging than older veteran SNCOs, including half of those aged 30-39 reporting an inability to translate their skills from the Services into a civilian environment, and available jobs not matching their current skills or current salary. Older veteran SNCOs, on the other hand, were more likely to find a lack of relevant qualifications to be a challenge (31.7% of those aged 50-59 and 31.3% of those aged 60 plus) perhaps reflecting changes in the upskilling of military veterans in more recent years.

Table 6.2: Percentage finding an issue “extremely challenging” or “very challenging” when seeking employment by service branch and seniority

Issue	Service (%)			Level of SNCO		Total
	Navy	Army	RAF	More senior	Less senior	
Lack of support from Armed Forces transition services	23.7	26.6	14.1	23.6	24.0	23.9
Lack of support from military charities	10.3	16.1	6.0	12.8	13.8	13.5
Lack of support from family, friends or local community	4.1	5.2	3.4	3.0	5.7	4.7
Negative attitudes from a potential employer/employers	19.6	25.5	18.1	26.0	21.8	23.4
Lack of relevant skills	21.6	21.3	9.4	17.9	19.8	19.1
Lack of relevant qualifications	23.7	21.8	18.8	19.3	22.8	21.5
Lack of self-confidence	7.2	8.7	8.7	7.8	9.0	8.5
Lack of information about job opportunities	19.6	20.9	12.1	18.2	19.6	19.1
Lack of interview experience/skills	19.6	25.3	17.4	21.6	24.0	23.1
Inability to sell myself well to an employer (either in an application or in an interview)	24.7	16.8	14.8	16.6	17.9	17.4
Inability to translate my skills from the Services into a civilian environment	29.9	27.4	18.1	25.3	26.3	25.9
Available jobs not matching my current skills	28.9	28.5	15.4	24.3	27.1	26.0
Available jobs not matching my current salary	30.9	34.4	23.5	34.1	30.5	31.9
Reluctance to ask for help	20.6	20.1	12.8	17.2	19.8	18.8
Physical health/disability issues	6.2	11.3	7.4	7.8	11.2	9.9
Mental health issues	12.4	13.9	7.4	10.8	13.4	12.5
Criminal record	1.0	1.1	0.0	0.3	1.2	0.9
Other (please specify)	4.1	2.0	1.3	2.4	2.0	2.2

Overall, it would appear that different groups experience different challenges and it is useful to distinguish by Service, seniority, age and gender in examining the kinds of challenges faced by veteran SNCOs. Not all SNCOs face a large number of difficulties and RAF veteran SNCOs stand out as the Service which appears to be the least likely to struggle. On the other hand, both Army and Navy veteran SNCOs had some similar – and some different - challenges. Navy veteran SNCOs appear to be those who found it most difficult to sell themselves well to a potential employer. Female veteran SNCOs also demonstrate some difficulties with self-confidence and selling themselves well to employers; both groups of veteran SNCOs may benefit from some targeted support in these areas. Male veteran SNCOs, however, appear to be more likely to feel the need for a second career, reflecting gendered norms around breadwinning and care. For those male veteran SNCOs with a non-working partner, these concerns may be even more prevalent.

A lack of understanding of SNCO skills and experience

Similar themes emerged from the qualitative data (interviews and write-in comments to the survey). The following section highlights the most prominent challenges.

One veteran SNCO described his early experiences of looking for a job when people tended not to believe his CV: as a WO you can be responsible for 600 persons, their welfare and efficiency. If you say that [to employers] they *'look at you as if you are nuts'*. So he has had to *'massively'* downplay his experience and his latest CV says he can *'lead a team of 30 plus'* so that in civvy street people understand it. His risk management is *'do I advise withdrawing people so we don't lose two or three who may be fatally injured? And can we afford to do that and what would be the impact overall?'* Although there is a huge difference in his level of risk management and their level, civilian employers interpret that to mean he wouldn't be able to understand a lower level of risk management. People have an assumption that SNCOs are all out doing high level stuff – *'we're not; we still have to get socks for the guys, do the things that everybody else does and risk manage that level too'*. If they say you need to be trustworthy, and you say that you were responsible for the safety and security of nuclear weapons, they look at you and go *'I don't like that, that doesn't fit the box'*. As a result, he now matches very banal examples and he has found that he has been closer to success. It took him 3-4 months to get his CV *'down to a level'* where people would believe it.

There were multiple examples of similar experiences, where employers did not recognise the skills and experience of veteran SNCOs or did not value those skills and experiences. One veteran SNCO said that one of the things they tell you [in the Services] is that your skills are transferable. However, when you come to a civilian organisation they do not understand those skills as you do not have an NVQ or Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualification or something they understand. She had done *'a load of courses'* in the Army but they are irrelevant when trying to translate them into a civilian workplace. When looking at job ads she could not see how she could fit into those roles as they translate completely differently. She added later that if she was an Officer, *'everyone knows what that looks like'*, what that translates to.

Another SNCO said that he had faced difficulties translating his skills and qualifications into the civilian workplace (and still does). His whole 22 years could be captured in one line: *'in the*

Royal Navy. Also, changing role every 2 or 3 years within the Services could actually make it look like you are not stable to an employer who is unfamiliar with the Armed Forces.

Others commented that the modern way of recruiting means that people who do not have ‘a *standard CV*’ (which the military are less likely to have) are more likely to be sifted out for jobs. There is ‘*greater suspicion*’ and ‘*more risk*’ with ex-military personnel. If you use words like ‘*discipline*’ in an interview, people switch off (they assume you are referring to marching on the parade square or corporal punishment, rather than being on time). One veteran SNCO commented that SNCO is also middle management. Many companies have cut away their middle management roles so the roles for SNCOs are just not there anymore. RFEA, the Forces Employment Charity also highlights that many veteran SNCOs struggle as they tend to apply for jobs at too high a level, i.e. senior management rather than middle management (although they manage very large numbers of people in the military and are well paid, these kinds of jobs do not exist in the civilian world). As a result, it is likely that they will be paid less and will manage fewer people if they do find a job at middle management level, which is often difficult to accept for those who have had greater levels of seniority in the military.

Write-in comments to the survey similarly commented on this issue and included:

- *More emphasis should be placed on changing an individual’s language from military to civilian and how to express your previous experience to interviewers in language they understand.*
- *Being able to translate my military skills and courses into recognised civilian equivalent.*

Because this was such an important theme, a 3-pronged approach to this problem may provide a solution:

- Employers could become more engaged with SNCOs before and during the resettlement phase, helping to ‘civilianise’ CVs and provide work placements and shadowing, allowing them to become more familiar with the skills and expertise that SNCOs could bring to an organisation;
- The MOD could also help by a) providing veteran SNCO mentors who have been out in the workplace already and have had both good and bad experiences, and b) providing additional support with CV writing and interview skills;
- The SNCO should engage fully with what is on offer via the CTP, attend relevant courses, do their research on what employers are looking for and be willing to take a lower-level job in order to gain greater experience of the civilian workplace.

6.4 Mental health issues on transition

We have already demonstrated that a relatively large proportion of veteran SNCOs reported mental health issues to be a challenge on transition, with female and younger veteran SNCOs reporting higher levels of mental health challenges overall than other veteran SNCOs (23.3% of women and 26.9% of younger veteran SNCOs). A large number of participants also commented in the survey on mental health issues during and after transition (see also Section 7):

- *I think I remember doing a survey after I left on how I was doing. I really needed someone to come and visit me (like a CPN). In the way that a new born baby gets community nurse visits something similar might spot problems early and save people wasted years of mental suffering.*
- *Being taught mindfulness and how to decompress after almost two decades serving the country.*
- *Someone who could see through the facade of confidence to the frightened person within and could dismiss that outer bullshit well enough to see the real need.*
- *Mental support as it's hard to walk through the gates for the last time.*

Mental health issues are clearly an issue for those about to transition and those who have already transitioned (some were diagnosed with PTSD years after leaving). Mandatory courses on mental wellbeing while still in Service would both help to acknowledge this as a common problem, thereby alleviating some of the stigma attached to reporting mental health problems, and would also allow SNCOs to be better mentally prepared for life after the Services.

6.5 Summing up

'Success' in transition, as defined by the SNCOs, is related to job satisfaction and enjoyment, as well as having a better work-life balance, but also having enough money to survive. The most useful support on making the transition was reported as support from family and friends; financial security was also an important factor. Personal characteristics (determination to succeed, self-confidence and self-belief) were also ranked highly by respondents, whereas support from the Armed Forces transition services was only ranked in the top two by 10% of respondents.

When asked which skills and competencies they had gained through Service which had helped them in making the transition to civilian employment, responses varied by Service, seniority, gender and age. More senior veteran SNCOs were more likely than less senior veteran SNCOs to report an ability to promote themselves, as well as commercial and financial awareness (although this was rarely reported overall). Younger veteran SNCOs were slightly more likely than older veteran SNCOs to report commercial awareness, good networks/networking skills and digital/IT skills, perhaps reflecting more recent changes in the nature of military training and greater familiarity with IT and social media.

Almost a third of participants in the survey reported available jobs not matching their current salary to be extremely or very challenging, which may reflect both a need to earn a good salary to support other family members, but also a degree of naivety in what SNCOs expect to earn after leaving the Services (military pensions provide a 'top-up' or a 'buffer' for veterans and so it may be less important to earn the same salary as before). RAF veteran SNCOs found fewer issues to be challenging than veteran SNCOs in the other Services, which suggests greater technical skills or a greater 'closeness' to civilians from working alongside contractors while in the Services. On the other hand, Army veteran SNCOs found a lack of interview experience/skills to be very challenging, as well as negative attitudes from potential employers. A higher proportion of Navy veteran SNCOs found an inability to sell themselves well to an employer to be extremely or very challenging. The reasons for this are unclear (a

lack of engagement with resettlement, an inability to adapt or a lack of self-confidence may be part of the explanation). Again, targeted support for these groups in the areas in which they report the greatest difficulties may be less resource-intensive and prove more successful in the longer-run than a one-size-fits-all programme of support. It is hoped that these findings will provide useful evidence for any revisions to the CTP offering.

Differences by gender and age were notable: while one may expect older veteran SNCOs to report more challenges translating their skills and qualifications to a civilian workforce, reflecting changes in the training of military Serving personnel, male veteran SNCOs were more likely than females to find a lack of support from the Armed Forces transition services, negative attitudes from potential employers, and a lack of relevant skills and qualifications, to be extremely or very challenging when seeking work, as well as available jobs matching current skills. Female veteran SNCOs appeared to rate their skills more poorly overall than male veteran SNCOs, particularly their ability to promote themselves and presentation skills, good networks/networking skills and digital/IT skills. This may require some targeted confidence-building and practical support for female SNCOs (as they are very much in the minority in the Services, their needs may be overlooked in favour of male SNCOs but these findings have highlighted distinct gender differences, both in their skills and competencies, and in the challenges faced). Younger veteran SNCOs overall found the issues included to be more challenging than older veteran SNCOs, but it may be that these issues were more recent and therefore more resonant for the younger participants.

Many veteran SNCOs had left the Services with unrealistic expectations and found it difficult to match their skills and experience to available jobs (there is some evidence that equivalent middle management roles paid at a similar level do not exist in civilian employment); others found difficulties in selling themselves to employers in a CV or during an interview. Mental health issues were a challenge for many when leaving the Services, and the survey highlighted that these issues were particularly challenging for female and younger veteran SNCOs.

The following case study highlights some of the challenges and experiences of a female veteran SNCO, which provides greater insight into the gender differences (and also some of the similarities) in the quantitative data described above.

Case study 4

Background and current circumstances
A 33-year old RAF veteran who left the Services in 2014. She is married (her husband is still serving) with no children. She is working full-time as a Project Manager. Since leaving the RAF she has had a number of jobs.
Aspirations on leaving the Armed Forces
She left the RAF for a number of reasons (lack of promotion opportunities, desire to work elsewhere and because of systematic bullying). She did not have any preconceived expectations or aspirations before she left. She would have liked to have matched her salary; however, she was also realistic (she was changing career and knew that she would have to start at the bottom). When she first left she went into business with a friend, but this did not work out. Her aspirations have changed over time in line with the jobs she has had.
Support received from the military

She left the RAF pretty quickly. She put her notice in and started her resettlement straight away (so slightly less than two years). She did all the compulsory courses and the two-day self-employment workshop. The self-employment module was helpful but she didn't learn much that was new; it would not have been enough information to set up her own business from. She also had support from CTP with her CV which she described as '*gleaming*'. She was focused on going into business when she left so she did resettlement courses relevant to this. The courses have not helped her with getting a job since - they were all very niche and particular to the business. However, she knew some time before she left that she was going to leave so she studied events management and '*topped up*' her HND to a degree using her Enhanced Learning Credits (ELC).

On reflection she would have found more '*holistic, wrap around care*' to be useful. For example, she didn't know the difference between a private and NHS dentist or how to get a repeat prescription. Help with these types of '*life skills*' would have been really useful. She also thinks there is not enough support/information for jobs in the '*creative sector*'. She understands why (most Service leavers do not go into this type of work) but she would have found it helpful.

Challenges experienced

Her husband was still serving when she left so they were still living in a married quarter; therefore, she was in a position where she could take a lower paid job. Now they have a mortgage, the situation would not be the same. The main barriers she faced were personal barriers. She didn't think she was institutionalised but leaving made her realise she was. Adjusting to life in civvy street - different sense of humour, culture and work ethic - have all been hard. She also struggled with jobs that she didn't find challenging enough (hence changing jobs a number of times). She also couldn't understand the mentality of some people she worked with who hated their jobs but weren't leaving or looking for other jobs. If she didn't enjoy her job she just left.

Making friends was an interesting one. She essentially became a '*military wife*' when she left so she tried to become friends with other military wives, but she found this difficult because she felt they had little in common other than the military wife link. Instead, she found a hobby with a local civilian group and made new friends. She made a conscious effort to step away from the military lifestyle. She also learnt that she had to amend her lifestyle and humour to fit in, which she sometimes found out the '*hard way*'.

SNCO-specific issues?

She thinks the duration of time spent away from a civilian environment is a barrier rather than rank, per se. For example, an SNCO will likely have done at least 10/12 years (up to 22 years) and will have been out of that environment for a longer period of time. It will have been a long time since they had a job interview and the longer you serve the more institutionalised you become. She thinks age rather than rank is the issue. SNCOs tend to be older when they leave. She also thinks that some might be in a different stage of life (have children, for example) so there is a need to maintain a certain level of income. Different issues for different people depending on their circumstances.

Suggestions for change/advice for other SNCOs

She commented that there is loads of support out there, in the form of military charities. However, barriers to use by veterans are awareness and pride. Inherently, service men and women don't want to ask for help or support.

7. Life in civvy street

Summary of findings

- Around 90% of all survey participants had planned to continue working when they left, whereas only around 80% were currently in work at the time of the survey and almost 11% were inactive.
- The proportion of SNCOs unable to work due to poor health or disability (4.5% overall) is much higher for Army veteran SNCOs than the other Services.
- RAF veteran SNCOs appear to do better in employment than those in the other two Services, while the percentage unemployed is highest for Navy veteran SNCOs (15.8%).
- Male veteran SNCOs are more likely than female veteran SNCOs to be in work full-time (65.7% v 53.5%), whereas women are more likely to be working part-time (11.6% v 5.3%), less likely to be self-employed or own a business while working (0% v 8.6%), but more likely to be volunteering (4.7% v 0.2%). Similar proportions of male and female veteran SNCOs are unemployed but looking for work (7.9% v 7.0%), but women are more likely to be unable to work due to poor health or disability (14.0% v 4.5%) and more likely to be looking after the home or family full-time (2.3% v 0.2%).
- Younger veteran SNCOs are more likely than older veteran SNCOs to be unemployed and looking for work (15.4%), and part-time work increases with age.
- There are no notable differences by seniority in the proportion working but more senior veteran SNCOs are more likely to be economically inactive than less senior veteran SNCOs (13.6% v 9.1%) and more likely to have not sought work (21.1% v 5.3%).
- 43.8% of all veteran SNCOs and 47.1% of those formerly in the Army are working more than 40 hours a week. Around two-fifths of all veteran SNCOs and half of RAF veteran SNCOs said they wanted to work fewer hours.
- The higher the level of educational qualification, the higher the percentage in work. Correspondingly, the percentage employed full-time declines as the level of qualification declines, while the percentage employed part-time increases. Inactivity is also highest for those with poorer qualifications.
- RAF veteran SNCOs and more senior veteran SNCOs are most likely, and Navy veteran SNCOs least likely, to mention enabling skills gained through Service. RAF veteran SNCOs are particularly more likely than other veteran SNCOs to mention 'ability to persevere and see things through to the end' and 'independence and independent thinking'.

Summary of findings continued...

- RAF veteran SNCOs again appear to find issues while in work to be less of a challenge than the other Services, whereas a greater proportion of Army veteran SNCOs found an inability to adapt to a civilian environment to be a serious challenge, as well as an inability to make as much money as expected and negative attitudes from work colleagues. More Army veteran SNCOs reported mental health issues to be extremely or very challenging and more than a quarter of Navy veteran SNCOs reported an inability to use their skills and experience to be a challenge.
- Male veteran SNCOs are more likely than female veteran SNCOs to report lower earnings than expected as a serious challenge (28.5% v 23.3%), whereas younger veteran SNCOs find a raft of issues to be more challenging than older veteran SNCOs. Over a quarter of younger veteran SNCOs find mental health issues to be extremely or very challenging.
- When veteran SNCOs were successful in gaining employment, there were other difficulties related to a difference in work culture and work ethic, different management styles and a perceived lack of commitment in civvy street. Many had either left jobs because they were unhappy or had lost their job.
- A loss of identity and status appear to be particular issues for SNCOs when transitioning out of the Services. This is linked to length of time in Service, as many SNCOs have been in for well over 20 years (this would appear to be a particular issue for more senior SNCOs who have gained a high level of seniority and recognition during their time in the Services).

7.1 Introduction

The previous sections have highlighted some of the challenges faced by veteran SNCOs in preparing for transition and also in making the first steps into the civilian world. It appears that there are differences by Service, seniority, gender and age, and that a more targeted approach to support may be beneficial, focusing upon those areas of need identified by particular groups. This section describes the longer-term issues for veteran SNCOs who have made the transition. The first sub-section highlights the current employment status of survey participants, and then leads in to employment challenges, followed by any other challenges encountered by veteran SNCOs in civilian life.

7.2 Employment status of veteran SNCOs

Employment plans on leaving

Questions in the survey asked participants what they had planned to do when initially leaving the Services (see Tables A2.14 to A2.16 in the Appendix). Almost 90% of all veteran SNCOs intended to continue working when they left the Armed Forces, this percentage being slightly lower for the Army, in which the percentage planning to recuperate from injury is highest. Only 1.3% had planned to retire. This is likely to be a reflection of the ages of SNCOs when they

leave the Services (most would be in their forties when leaving, so requiring them to undertake further employment, especially if they had a family to support, and this differs from Officers who are often retiring after a full career in the Services).

The percentage planning to undertake further training or study was highest for Navy veteran SNCOs (22.1%), which may suggest a need for this particular group to spend time upskilling or reskilling (in the previous section it had been shown that Navy veteran SNCOs found the greatest difficulty in selling themselves well to a potential employer).

When comparing figures by gender and age, male veteran SNCOs were more likely than female veteran SNCOs to plan to continue working, whereas women were more likely to plan to look after home and/or family or recuperate from injury or illness which is supportive of general employment and care trends among the wider population. Younger veteran SNCOs were also more likely than older veteran SNCOs to plan to recuperate from injury or illness.

Labour market outcomes of veteran SNCOs

Having explored plans upon leaving the Services, Table 7.1 describes the current labour market outcomes of veteran SNCOs in the survey by Service (additional tables, A2.17 and A2.18, showing breakdowns by age and gender, and by seniority, are included in the Appendix).

Over three-quarters of veteran SNCOs reported that they were working (either employed or self-employed). Only 2.2% had not sought work after leaving the Armed Forces, 3.2% were retired and 6.2% were economically inactive. A further 8.2% were unemployed and looking for work, with 0.1% unemployed but not looking for work. Those unable to work due to poor health or disability represented 4.5% of the total, with this percentage being much higher for Army veteran SNCOs than the other Services.

Only 0.8% were undertaking further training full-time, a much lower figure than described in initial plans highlighted earlier (although they may have undertaken training upon leaving as the figures presented here only reflect current circumstances and some participants may have been undertaking part-time training while also working).

The percentage working is highest for RAF veteran SNCOs, while the percentage unemployed is highest for Navy veteran SNCOs. Again, RAF veteran SNCOs appear to fare better overall, whereas Navy veteran SNCOs may be the furthest removed from civilian life, in part due to long absences at sea, but there may also be some greater difficulties with transferable skills and an ability to sell themselves to employers (as outlined in Section 6).

Table 7.1: Labour market status by branch of Armed Forces (percentages)

Status	Service (%)			All	
	Navy	Army	RAF	Number	Percent
In paid employment full-time	64.2	64.8	72.7	503	66.2
In paid employment part-time	4.2	5.6	7.7	44	5.8
Self-employed/own a business while also undertaking paid employment	6.3	2.1	2.8	21	2.8
Self-employed or own a business only	2.1	5.4	5.6	38	5.0
In voluntary employment	0.0	0.6	0.7	4	0.5
Training or studying full-time	1.1	0.8	0.7	6	0.8
Unemployed and looking for work	15.8	7.7	4.9	62	8.2
Unemployed and not looking for work	0.0	0.2	0.0	1	0.1
Unable to work through disability or health issues	0.0	6.1	1.4	34	4.5
Looking after the home or family full-time	3.2	0.4	0.0	5	0.7
Retired	2.1	3.4	2.8	24	3.2
Other	1.1	3.1	0.7	18	2.4
Total (100%)	95	522	143	760	760
Percentage working					
Percentage working	76.8	78.4	89.5	610	80.3
Percentage inactive					
Percentage inactive	6.3	13.2	4.9	82	10.8
Percent not sought work					
Percent not sought work	0.0	3.1	0.7	17	2.2

In addition to Service differences, there were differences in labour market outcomes by gender, age and seniority.

Male veteran SNCOs are more likely than female veteran SNCOs to be in work full-time (65.7% v 53.5%), whereas women are more likely to be working part-time (11.6% v 5.3%), less likely to be self-employed or own a business while working (0% v 8.6%), but more likely to be volunteering (4.7% v 0.2%). Similar proportions of men and women are unemployed but looking for work (7.9% v 7.0%), but women are more likely to be unable to work due to poor health or disability (14.0% v 4.5%) and more likely to be looking after the home or family full-time (2.3% v 0.2%). These findings reflect some of the traditional gender norms and values around breadwinning and care, whereby men are more responsible for earning and women more responsible for care. However, it is notable that a relatively small proportion of female veteran SNCOs are working part-time, in comparison with national figures. Previous research shows that professional-level women with better skills and qualifications are likely to work full-time rather than part-time, as part-time work does not attract the same salaries, the same levels of training and responsibility and the same opportunities for progression as full-time work (see e.g. Warren and Lyonette, 2018).

Veteran SNCOs aged 40 to 49 are most likely to be working, while those aged 60 or more are most likely to be economically inactive, retired or unable to work due to poor health or disability. Those aged 40 to 49 are least likely to have sought work (it is unclear why but they may have found a job easily before leaving the Armed Forces). The percentage unemployed and looking for work is highest for 30 to 39 year olds, lowest for 40 to 49 year olds, and progressively higher for older veteran SNCOs. Similarly, the percentage working part-time increases with age and the percentage self-employed and employed part-time is highest for those aged over 60, perhaps reflecting greater difficulties in gaining full-time employment or a desire to work fewer hours as they get older.

The percentage in training is highest for those aged 30 to 39, although this is still only a small proportion of veteran SNCOs. This is somewhat surprising, given the large number of comments in the previous section about available jobs not matching their current skills and an inability to translate their skills from the Services into a civilian environment.

More senior SNCOs are more likely to be economically inactive than less senior SNCOs (13.6% v 9.1%). They are also less likely to be unemployed and looking for work (6.3% v 9.3%). More senior SNCOs are also much more likely to have not sought work after leaving the Armed Forces (21.1% v 5.3%) and more likely to be unable to work due to disability or health issues (6.3% v 3.4%). The reasons for high levels of economic inactivity are unclear but may reflect increasing physical health issues as a result of service and growing disillusionment with job-seeking over time (see Table A2.18 in the Appendix for more detailed figures).

Paid work hours and attitudes to working more or less hours

Survey participants were then asked how many hours they worked and whether or not they would prefer more or less hours in order to determine if there were high levels of either underemployment or overworking by certain groups (see Table 7.2).

Table 7.2: Paid hours worked and attitudes to working more or less paid hours by branch of Armed Forces (percentages)

Hours worked	Service (%)			All	
	Navy	Army	RAF	Number	Percent
0	0.0	1.2	0.8	6	1.0
1-12	0.0	1.0	1.6	6	1.0
13-19	4.1	2.2	2.4	15	2.4
20-30	2.7	6.0	4.8	33	5.4
30-40	57.5	42.5	52.8	285	46.4
40-50	28.8	36.5	28.0	208	33.9
50 plus	6.8	10.6	9.6	61	9.9
Total	73	416	125	614	614
Want to work more hours (%)					
Much more	8.2	4.9	0.0	26	4.3
A bit more	6.8	6.3	4.8	37	6.1
About the same	46.6	46.6	45.2	282	46.3
A bit less	32.9	33.7	37.9	210	34.5
Much less	5.5	8.5	12.1	54	8.9
Total	73	412	124	609	609

Nearly half of all veteran SNCOs work 30 to 40 hours per week. Only 9.8% work less than 30 hours, but long hours working is prevalent, with 43.8% of all veteran SNCOs and 47.1% of those formerly in the Army working more than 40 hours a week. However, in spite of these long hours, nearly half of veteran SNCOs said they would like to continue to work the same number of hours (but around two-fifths of all veteran SNCOs and half of RAF veteran SNCOs said they wanted to work fewer hours).

When looking at the figures by gender and age (not reported here), both male and female veteran SNCOs are most likely to work 30 to 40 hours per week, with the percentage of females in this band higher than males. Women are more likely than men to work fewer hours, while 43.8% of men (compared to 25% of women) work more than 40 hours per week. Men are more likely to want to work more hours, while women are more likely to want to work fewer hours. Again, this may reflect family care responsibilities, with women attempting to balance work with childcare or eldercare. For men, the desire to work more hours may reflect lower salaries after leaving the Services.

The percentage working between 30 and 40 hours per week varies little by age, but the percentage working fewer than 30 hours per week increases with age, probably driven by the higher percentage of older veteran SNCOs in part-time work. The percentage working more than 40 hours is smallest by far for those aged over 60, which is not surprising.

Qualification levels

Veteran SNCOs' employment outcomes were then analysed by qualification level. Some of the previous literature found that qualifications were important in SNCOs' outcomes. Connelly (2016) reported that all military personnel are encouraged to take advantage of professional

and career opportunities and that SNCOs taking leadership and management training and education courses can use this to gain civilian-accredited qualifications and memberships to professional bodies. Others suggest that those of higher ranks experience easier transitions, as they are more likely to have a higher level qualification (Morin, 2011; Van Til et al., 2016). The previous section highlighted some of the concerns and challenges faced by SNCOs in looking for employment and previous research in the US reported that NCOs had significant concerns about competing for jobs with civilians with higher education qualifications (Johnston et al., 2010). Table 7.3 shows the labour market status of veteran SNCOs by their highest level of qualification and shows some marked differences.

In line with expectations, the higher the level of educational qualification, the higher the percentage in work. The percentage employed full-time declines in line with a decline in qualifications, while the percentage employed part-time increases for those with poorer qualifications. The percentage inactive is also highest for the more poorly qualified.

There is a markedly higher percentage unable to work due to poor health and disability among the least qualified compared with the most qualified and those whose highest qualification is a GCSE or GCE A-level are least likely to have sought work.

Although figures are not shown here, those with a degree or equivalent were most likely to have planned to undertake further training or study after leaving the Armed Forces, and those with GCSE A*-C or equivalent as their highest qualifications were least likely to do so, being those most likely to have planned to continue working. This is somewhat counter-intuitive, in that those with fewer or lower qualifications should be those most likely to want to upskill. However, these findings suggest that there may be differences in ability or desire to do further training and/or gain further qualifications. There were several examples in the qualitative interviews of veteran SNCOs who had done degrees while in Service (one went on to do a PhD in civilian life), but these are already those more likely to secure employment. Cost may also be a factor here, with more poorly-qualified veteran SNCOs perhaps less able to take time off from working or take a cut in salary to increase their qualifications. Confidence and pride may also play a part, with many SNCOs being in their late thirties or forties and perhaps feeling ill-prepared to undertake further study, especially if they did not gain many qualifications while at school.

The survey also showed that those with 'other' qualifications were most likely to have planned to recuperate from an injury or illness. The percentage working long hours is also highest for those with other qualifications as their highest qualification. Those with higher education qualifications are more likely to want to work "much more", while those with poorer qualifications are the most likely to want to work "a bit more". This may reflect greater ambition or enjoyment with work among those with higher qualifications (or conversely it could suggest underemployment). We are unable to clarify these findings.

Table 7.3: Labour market status by highest qualification

Labour market status	Qualification (%)					
	Degree or equivalent	Higher education	GCE A level or equivalent	GCSE grades A*-C or equivalent	Other qualification	All
In paid employment full-time	70.8	67.4	66.4	47.4	48.8	64.6
In paid employment part-time	5.3	5.1	5.5	8.8	9.3	5.8
Self-employed/own a business while also undertaking paid employment	2.7	3.3	4.5	1.8	2.3	3.1
Self-employed or own a business only	7.1	2.8	8.2	3.5	4.7	4.9
In voluntary employment	0.0	0.5	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.5
Training or studying full-time	0.9	0.5	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.5
Unemployed and looking for work	7.1	8.4	3.6	15.8	9.3	7.9
Unemployed and not looking for work	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2
Unable to work through disability or health issues	3.5	4.2	2.7	10.5	11.6	5.2
Looking after the home or family full-time	0.9	0.5	0.0	3.5	2.3	0.9
Retired	1.8	2.8	5.5	5.3	4.7	3.6
Other	0.0	4.7	0.9	3.5	7.0	2.9
Total (100%)	113	215	110	57	43	556
Percentage working	85.8	79.1	86.4	61.4	65.1	78.8
Percentage inactive	6.2	12.1	9.1	22.8	25.6	12.8
Percentage not sought work	6.3	8.7	17.6	18.2	13.3	33.3

Interestingly, veteran SNCOs with a degree or equivalent are most likely to have an economically active spouse, who is also most likely to be in full-time work (figures not shown here), whereas those with GCSE grades A*-C or equivalent as their highest qualification are most likely to have a spouse who is not working. This supports the suggestion above that poorly-qualified veteran SNCOs are those least likely to be able to afford to reduce their salary to gain higher qualifications. Previous work by the research team has shown that a working spouse can alleviate some of the pressures of military personnel who are making the transition into civilian employment (Lyonette et al., 2018).

Sector of employment

The most common industries mentioned by veteran SNCOs are Education, Telecommunications and IT, Defence, Security, Engineering, the NHS and Transport. Telecommunications and Security are more commonly mentioned by Army veteran SNCOs. The public sector is an important source of employment (e.g. NHS, Civil Service).

Telecommunications and Engineering are relatively more important for more junior veteran SNCOs, whereas Security is more common for those with a more senior rank. The Education sector is a more important source of employment for older veteran SNCOs. Those aged 40 to 49 tend to work in Telecommunications, Security, Engineering and Defence (See Tables A2.22 to A2.26 in Appendix). RFEA, the Forces Employment Charity notes that age is an issue in recruitment, with many employers preferring younger veterans, and the more senior SNCOs may therefore be at a particular disadvantage here, as they are usually older. There were many examples in the qualitative data of veteran SNCOs going into security roles overseas, partly because of the salaries available, but also because they could find only limited opportunities in other sectors.

7.3 Skills and competencies which helped while in civilian employment

Before reporting on the challenges faced in civilian employment, survey respondents were asked to report those skills and competencies gained through Service that helped them while in civilian employment.

Those most frequently mentioned (over 90%) were 'ability to cope under pressure', 'ability to cope with the unexpected' and 'ability to persevere and see things through to the end' (Table 7.4). The least frequently mentioned was 'managing risks or risk tolerance', although this was still reported by over three quarters of participants (75.7%). RAF veteran SNCOs and more senior veteran SNCOs were most likely and Navy veteran SNCOs least likely to mention the most frequently mentioned skills, supporting earlier findings relating to Service differences in transitions. RAF veteran SNCOs in particular were more likely than other veteran SNCOs to mention 'ability to persevere and see things through to the end' and 'independence and independent thinking'. More senior veteran SNCOs were more likely to report these skills and competencies than less senior veteran SNCOs.

When broken down by gender and age, male veteran SNCOs were generally more likely to report these skills and competencies than female veteran SNCOs (apart from 'ability to try new things', 'ability to persevere and see things through to the end' and 'independence and independent thinking', where women scored higher). Reflecting earlier findings, these could

demonstrate a lack of self-confidence in women or an inability to put themselves forward to the same degree as male SNCOs.

Younger veteran SNCOs were less likely than older veteran SNCOs to report ‘resilience’ and ‘ability to try new things’, but more likely to report ‘ability to cope with the unexpected’, ‘ability to persevere and see things through to the end’ and ‘independence and independent thinking’ (similar to the results for women v men) (see Table A2.20 in the Appendix).

The majority of veteran SNCOs were confident that the skills and competencies they gained through Service helped them while in civilian employment. Once in employment, it may be that veteran SNCOs ‘find their feet’ and capitalise on the skills they have already gained, which are all transferable into a civilian workplace, but it appears that getting into civilian employment in the first place often presents the greatest difficulties. This is not always the case, however, as will be demonstrated in the next section.

Table 7.4: Percentage reporting skills and competencies gained through Service that helped them while in civilian employment by service and seniority

	Service			Level of SNCO		Total
	Navy	Army	RAF	More senior	Less senior	
Managing risks or risk tolerance	64.3	75.3	81.7	77.0	74.1	75.2
Resilience	90.0	84.7	81.7	85.5	84.3	84.7
Ability to try new things	81.4	83.0	81.7	82.5	82.6	82.5
Ability to cope under pressure	91.4	94.8	95.4	97.0	93.0	94.5
Ability to cope with the unexpected	92.9	90.7	95.4	92.0	91.9	91.9
Ability to persevere and see things through to the end	85.7	89.0	96.3	90.5	89.8	90.1
Independence and independent thinking	80.0	82.7	91.7	87.5	82.3	84.2
Self-confidence	84.3	86.8	89.0	90.5	84.9	86.9
Other (please specify)	2.9	4.7	4.6	4.0	4.7	4.4
Responses	70	365	109	200	344	544

7.4 Longer-term challenges for veteran SNCOs

Challenges faced while in employment

Although the employment outcomes of veteran SNCOs outlined in the previous sub-sections appear on the surface to be relatively positive, headline findings of labour market status provide little information on the lived experiences of veteran SNCOs attempting to enter and stay in employment. Following on from Section 6, which described the challenges faced in

looking for employment, survey participants were also asked what challenges, if any, they had faced while in employment since leaving the Services.

The following table shows the proportion of veteran SNCOs who found particular issues to be extremely or very challenging when in employment, by Service and seniority (Table A2.21 in the Appendix shows the proportion by gender and age). Although previous research reported that structural factors (such as branch and role within the military, age, education level, and years of experience) had neither a positive nor negative impact on transitions to civilian life (Cox et al., 2016), our data found some notable differences. Table 7.5 shows that, once again, RAF veteran SNCOs overall appear to find issues to be less of a challenge than the other two Services. A greater proportion of Army veteran SNCOs found an 'inability to adapt to a civilian environment' to be a serious challenge, as well as an 'inability to make as much money as expected' and 'negative attitudes from work colleagues'. More Army veteran SNCOs reported 'mental health issues' to be extremely or very challenging. Over a quarter of Navy veteran SNCOs reported an 'inability to use my skills and experience' to be a challenge. There were very few differences by seniority, although Army and more senior veteran SNCOs were more likely to report 'not being respected' as a serious challenge. Again, this would support earlier findings which show the disconnect between the seniority and respect gained while in Service, particularly for those at the highest SNCO levels, and the reality of civilian employment where their skills and experience are unrecognised and poorly understood.

Over a quarter of all respondents reported 'difficulties adapting to a civilian environment', 'inability to make as much money as expected' and an 'inability to use my skills and experience' as extremely or very challenging, further reflecting the earlier findings around expectations and reality. Male veteran SNCOs were more likely to report lower earnings than expected as a serious challenge, whereas female veteran SNCOs were more likely to report an 'inability to earn as much money as I need to pay bills and support myself/the family'.

Younger veteran SNCOs found a raft of issues to be more challenging than older veteran SNCOs, which could reflect the more recent (and perhaps rawer) experiences of those in the younger age brackets. Over a quarter of younger veteran SNCOs found 'mental health issues' to be extremely or very challenging over the longer-term.

Table 7.5: Percentage finding an issue “extremely challenging” or “very challenging” when in employment by Service and seniority

	Navy	Army	RAF	More senior	Less senior	Total
Negative attitudes from work colleagues	10.3	19.0	13.4	17.9	16.3	16.9
Inability to make as much money as I expected	19.6	22.6	13.4	20.3	20.6	20.5
Inability to earn as much money as I need to pay bills and support myself/the family	10.3	13.1	6.7	10.1	12.4	11.6
Inability to use my skills and experience	26.8	21.1	12.1	19.9	20.2	20.1
Difficulties in adapting to a civilian environment	18.6	23.8	14.8	20.3	22.2	21.5
Difficulties in maintaining a civilian job	9.3	11.1	5.4	8.4	10.6	9.8
Inability to progress/be promoted	18.6	17.6	12.1	16.6	16.7	16.6
Not being part of a team or unit	15.5	13.3	6.7	12.8	12.0	12.3
Not being respected	15.5	17.7	12.8	17.2	16.1	16.5
Reluctance to ask for help	11.3	12.8	6.0	10.5	11.8	11.3
Physical health/disability issues	4.1	7.8	3.4	5.4	7.1	6.5
Mental health issues	8.2	12.8	2.0	10.1	10.2	10.2
Criminal record	1.0	0.6	0.0	0.3	0.6	0.5
Other (please specify)	4.1	1.8	1.3	1.7	2.2	2.0

There was a wealth of qualitative data relating to the challenges faced while in employment which is condensed here. The primary issues appeared to be related to a different work culture and management style, different standards and work ethic, losing or leaving a job, needing to change attitudes to survive, language and humour, job insecurity, moving from job to job and financial worries.

Different work culture and management style

The lack of communication between management levels in civilian organisations was a surprise for many veteran SNCOs. One told us that in his current job he has kept his ‘eyes and ears open and [his] mouth shut’ in order to get the ‘lay of the land’. He has learned that he needs to rein in his natural military tendencies. Another said that the ‘office politics’ were difficult (working in a big quiet office of 200 people in her first job after the Services, she thought ‘is this my life?’ It also dawns on you that you aren’t important any more, ‘you haven’t got that

badge; people don't do things for you – you have to do them yourself. There is no rank structure and no recognition of your status any more'. She added that your boss may even be younger than you which doesn't happen in the military.

Another veteran SNCO reflected on the different style of management in the Army and an inability to raise your voice in *'civvy street'*. SNCOs have management skills, but need to amend them. He had to change his behaviour to fit into a civilian environment and as an SNCO he has found this really hard.

Different standards and work ethic

Another strong theme running through the interviews and write-in comments related to a lack of commitment and poorer standards within civilian employment. One veteran SNCO told us that he *'cares too much'* whereas the people who work for him *'don't care'*. In the Army he would work until the job is done, but that is not the attitude in civvy street. He finds this hard to deal with and he tends to worry and not sleep. If someone had said to him can you *'stop until midnight tonight'* to complete a task, he would have done so (he was used to the mentality in the Army that you work until the job is done); however, his colleagues do not have the same attitude – they work their 37 hours and then go home.

Another interviewee told us that different standards were an issue. *'[My] job, my view, was always to maintain a high standard, to maintain safety more than anything else. To look after your people wherever you were'*. [He] was used to being *'the very last person to eat or to leave...they're all safe, they're all gone, and everything's gone well'*. He finds that it is the opposite in real life which has been difficult for him.

Losing or leaving a job

Several veteran SNCOs had ended up falling out with managers and/or colleagues and had either left voluntarily or had lost their jobs, often due to the issues highlighted above, although some commented on the more relaxed or flexible nature of life in the military. One example was a veteran SNCO whose first boss was ex-military and could call him day and night; he was a good friend. He then moved on and his new boss was a nightmare, *'a pure breed civilian'* who didn't have the same mentality he was used to: *'really harsh. Quite horrible'*. The environment he had been in the Army was that you did your work and it doesn't matter where, if you want to come in early, have a cup of tea, you do it. You don't *'sit at your desk for no reason'*. In the end, he had to leave his job; he blames the culture, but the individual boss was bad as well.

Need to change attitudes to survive

Many veteran SNCOs commented on the positive aspects of being an SNCO which can also act as a disadvantage in civilian life. One said that a *'can-do attitude'* - which the Forces have - can be a good and a bad thing: it means that people aren't always thinking things through, e.g. safety. In the civilian world there are more rules and regulations than when in the Forces / when on operation, so you have to take that into account. Veteran SNCOs have to learn to *'temper it'*; you are bound by a lot of legality. You have to really think through a decision rather than act on impulse which is what you do (and have to do) in the Forces.

Language and humour

Other veteran SNCOs said that the other '*massive difference*' is humour. One told us that when you see death, when you see serious injuries and accidents and you joke about it, that's how you get through that period of time. Your humour and the humour of people you've spent the last 35 years with is somewhat different to his current colleagues [a part-time role]. He has had to moderate what he says. The level of humour and what people are able to comprehend and laugh at are different in the '*real world*' than his life. Lots of apologies and explanation were involved. Although this is likely to be an issue for all veterans, it will be more difficult for those who have spent longer periods of time in the military and who have had very close, long-standing relationships with colleagues who have seen active service.

Job insecurity, moving from job to job

The survey results highlighted that out of 712 responses, 173 participants reported having only one job since leaving, whereas 54 had had 5 jobs and 117 had 6 jobs or more since leaving the Services. Some previous research also suggests that nearly half of newly hired veterans leave their first post-military job within the first year (Maury, Stone & Roseman, 2014). There were many examples of interview participants not staying long in one job, or having long periods of unemployment, which they had not anticipated on leaving.

One veteran SNCO partner told us that her husband was given the opportunity to retrain or pick up another profession to '*transfer across*' (i.e. to civvy street) 7 years before leaving; he realised that his existing qualifications '*didn't align*' (she described herself as a '*push factor*' here, telling him to make the change). He applied, went on the course and passed. He was put into training and went to Winchester for a year, finished and then worked as a Chartered Accountant in the Armed Forces for 3-4 years; this ensured that his qualification '*transferred across*'. In spite of this long-term planning, he initially '*struggled*' on leaving; employers wanted business experiences or manufacturing experience or sector-specific experience for an accountancy job. He worked in a local housing agency for just over a year and then moved to a private organisation for a few years before being made redundant; he then went to Dubai for a while before returning. '*Never really settled down anywhere*' and has been doing quite a bit of work overseas recently (6-7 months away then returns for a while). He now finds that he has to explain in an interview why he has had '*so many jobs*' because '*employers don't understand this*'. Even if employers are signed up to the Covenant he has to explain himself which she described as '*really really hard; he has never had a long period of unemployment but has to jump through hoops*'. He would return overseas if there was nothing locally (they are used to him being away): '*we fall into pace with him*' but it is not good for him being away from home so much. He has said that he can earn better pay overseas so can retire earlier but he can't secure a good job locally (as she was talking to the researcher on the phone her husband came into the room and told her that he had just lost his current job).

Multiple job-holding, or using lower-level jobs as stepping stones to something better, were common among the veteran SNCO interviewees. Those who recognised that starting at a lower level might lead to something better in the end, and showed employers that they had successfully gained some experience of civilian employment, were more likely to get into work that they were reasonably satisfied with, and so multiple job-holding was not necessarily a negative outcome for all veteran SNCOs. On the other hand, the levels of economic inactivity

outlined earlier may be a reflection of disengagement and disillusionment among some who have been seeking work for longer periods of time.

Financial worries

Lower pay was a big issue for a large proportion of both survey and interview participants. Of the survey participants, 37.8% said that their financial situation was worse than before leaving, 39% said that it was better than before, and 23.2% said they were in the same financial situation as before.

One veteran SNCO said that trying to find a job that pays a comparable wage is almost impossible. An Army SNCO partner told us that her husband left two years ago and is now on his third job. He started working in a health and safety role on leaving which was very low paid but he had his pension and lump sum (she had told him not to worry and take his time but *'he had the worry of not having a job'* and was getting quite stressed). He always got to the last two for any job he went for: *'a whole new world of interviewing'*. He now works for a national organisation (since January 2019) and is doing well.

All of the employment-related challenges outlined in the sections above present real problems for veteran SNCOs in making the transition into civilian employment. Many start a job, but then move on quickly or lose a job after falling out with a boss or a colleague. Multiple jobs on a CV may present a negative picture to a prospective employer and this highlights an even greater need for forward planning before leaving the Services. While some lower-level jobs can be seen as stepping-stones to a better position, others could show evidence of someone who is not able to fit in or work as a team player.

As well as employment-related challenges over the longer-term, there were other difficulties encountered by the veteran SNCOs which also had a profound effect on their abilities to find and maintain employment after leaving. These are highlighted below.

Other challenges for veteran SNCOs

Loss of status and time in Service

Related to the issue of a lack of planning and a reluctance to leave is the sudden loss of status which SNCOs encounter when leaving the Services. SNCOs have often joined the Services at 16 with few or no qualifications and have reached a high level role over many years, responsible for large numbers of serving personnel and commanding recognition and respect. In their late thirties or early forties, they are forced to consider a completely different life in the civilian world, including the need for a second career.

Typical comments from participants focused upon the high status gained while in the military and how this meant little or nothing in the civilian world. One veteran SNCO reported a *'massive loss, huge loss of identity'*. Overnight you go from: it's not *'rock star to poverty line'* but he said that it feels a bit like that. *'Go from something, someone, part of the best force in the world. Very proud, proud of your uniform, proud of your appearance, proud of the way you conduct yourself, proud of what you achieve, to assimilating yourselves with people who are probably not on the same page and that is very tough'*. He went on to describe the difficulties

he faced with this: *'didn't really know where I was or what I was. I still don't. I know where I am – as a father and a husband, as a wage earner. But in the Army I didn't see myself as that. I saw myself as a soldier (and a dad and a husband)'*. In the Army he had everything to support him. You don't realise how much you have until it's gone. Now he's *'a bloke that goes to work'*.

Another veteran SNCO also said that the hardest part for him was losing his identity. He said *'you don't know it's going on at the time'* but it does wear off after a while. He felt that it takes five years to leave the Services mentally.

Physical health issues

Research from Canada, highlighted in the literature review, found that veterans overall reported a variety of health problems, including arthritis, depression, anxiety, PTSD, hearing problems, pain and limited activity, and that SNCOs had the highest reported rate of arthritis (40%) (Van Til et al., 2016).

Several of the interviewees and the write-in comments in the survey referred to longer-term physical health issues which had arisen as a result of their time in Service. For many, this was often acknowledged as a simple by-product of life in the Services. Physical complaints included having to have knees and hips replaced, prolonged exposure to UV light (likely from being on ops) causing cataracts, the *'usual problems of ex-military'*, i.e. neck and knee problems. All of these are likely to affect the suitability of certain kinds of jobs in the civilian world.

One female veteran SNCO referred to a commonly-cited problem with leaving the military, especially in relation to health issues. She said that when you are in the Army all your healthcare is taken care of until the day you leave. The next day you are on your own. She has a lot of complex health-related problems. *'Intimidating trying to deal with that all yourself when it has all been done for you before.... just told to register with a new GP and discuss it [what her needs were] with them'*. No-one is there to assist you in trying to find your way through the system and she needed treatment when she left. The main challenge for her was health and trying to find employment in the local area that she was able to do. She took the first job she was offered as she was worried that she wouldn't be able to find a job. [She also gave up one job as she felt that she couldn't do it properly due to her health].

Mental health issues

The survey figures relating to those finding mental health issues to be a challenge were concerning. Interviewees and write-in survey comments also referred to mental health issues occurring after leaving. One veteran SNCO had not struggled in his transition but he does have *'issues'*, e.g. he wakes up in the middle of the night sweating about things that have happened in the past. On the other hand, he knows that some people are close to living on the streets. He is nearly 57, but he says he has a funeral every 4-5 months of people (veterans) dying of illness because they haven't looked after themselves or have *'topped themselves'*. So he thinks he is doing OK in comparison. He finds himself on social media, talking people back round, over 3-4 days: *'it's ok, you'll be fine,'* but a lot of people don't believe it will be fine.

Other write-in comments commonly referred to mental health problems after leaving, often years later. Some examples include:

- *Stress and anxiety, loss of confidence;*
- *Get bouts of depression when I cannot get regular work which has impeded my confidence and motivation;*
- *I have gained weight and have felt depressed which isn't something I have suffered before.*
- *When you leave you have no idea of what or how things work and the pressure is huge.*

In all, 38.5% of veteran SNCOs said that their health and wellbeing were worse than before leaving the Services; 12.8% said that they were better than before leaving, and 48.8% said that they were about the same as before.

Relationships with family

Survey respondents were also asked a series of questions relating to any additional impacts of working or looking for employment since leaving the Services, e.g. relationships with family and friends, housing and finances: more than a quarter (25.9%) said that relationships with family and friends were worse than before; 29.9% said that they were better since leaving, and 44.1% said they were about the same.

Interviewees also commented upon some of the relationship difficulties involved in moving into civilian life. For example, one SNCO said that in the military he was away a lot, therefore his relationship was '*bitty, part-time*' and now it is '*full-time*' because he is at home. This has been difficult as his partner is a '*housewife*' and is at home a lot of the time. A female veteran SNCO referred to the veteran SNCO being '*there 24/7*': this '*puts a tremendous strain on a relationship*' and '*can have drastic implications*'. She mentioned that sometimes she finds her partner '*smothering*' and likes it when he is away; she was used to spending periods alone and this is suddenly not possible anymore. One veteran SNCO recognised this difficulty and his first job meant working away from home (he was trying to get the right balance with his relationship with family/wife). Not being at home 24 hours a day helped with the transition. Having spent a long time away from home for many years (in the Royal Navy), he felt that if he had been at home 24/7 it would probably have put a strain on his relationship. This level of transition planning appears to have given both partners (and children) time to get used to their changed circumstances.

Financial worries

The literature highlighted financial concerns among veteran SNCOs after leaving the Services. In the survey, 37.8% said that their financial situation was worse than before, 39% said that it was better than before leaving, and 23.2% said they were in the same financial situation as before. Veteran SNCOs who were interviewed also referred to financial worries related to their partners not working: one commented that his partner was not working when he served (she brought up the children). He was worried about whether they would have enough money to live on when he left – it was all very '*stressful*'. Since leaving he has changed from job to job and been made redundant several times. He has had to reskill and reinvent himself which

'wears you down'. Having a working partner can reduce some of the stress related to family finances but earlier findings showed that those with poorer qualifications were the least likely to have a working partner, whereas those with higher qualifications were most likely to be able to draw on the support of a partner's salary. Lower-qualified veteran SNCOs would therefore appear to be particularly vulnerable to financial worries.

7.5 Summing up

The headline figures show that veteran SNCOs fare reasonably well in terms of employment status, although around 90% of all survey participants had planned to continue working when they left, whereas only around 80% were currently in work at the time of the survey and almost 11% were inactive¹⁶. While some of the older veteran SNCOs will now be retired, perhaps affecting the results slightly (although very few reported retirement as their current status), there were differences by Service, gender, age, seniority and qualification level.

The proportion of those unable to work due to poor health or disability (4.5%) was much higher for Army veteran SNCOs than the other Services. RAF veteran SNCOs appear to do better in employment than those in the other two Services, while the percentage unemployed is highest for Navy veteran SNCOs.

Male veteran SNCOs are more likely than female veteran SNCOs to be in work and less likely to be economically inactive, whereas women are more likely to be working part-time, less likely to be self-employed, but more likely to be volunteering. Men are more likely to be unemployed, but women are more likely to be unable to work due to poor health or disability and more likely to be looking after the home of family full-time.

Younger veteran SNCOs are more likely to be unemployed and looking for work, perhaps reflecting their more recent entry into the labour market, and their need for a second career. Part-time work increases with age.

More senior veteran SNCOs are more likely to be economically inactive than less senior veteran SNCOs. They are also less likely to be unemployed and looking for work, more likely to be retired and much less likely than less senior veteran SNCOs to have sought work after leaving the Armed Forces.

Long hours working is common among veteran SNCOs, with almost half of all veteran SNCOs and those formerly in the Army working more than 40 hours a week. Around two-fifths of all veteran SNCOs and half of RAF veteran SNCOs said they wanted to work fewer hours. Women are more likely than men to work fewer hours, but men are more likely to want to work more hours, while women are more likely to want to work fewer hours.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the higher the level of educational qualification, the higher the percentage in work. Correspondingly, the percentage employed full-time declines as the

¹⁶ The percentages vary in some of the tables, as a large proportion of respondents answered the questions on Service but fewer recorded their demographic details; as such, the numbers used in some of the tables are lower than others. The broad findings are unaffected, however.

highest level of qualification declines, while the percentage employed part-time increases. Inactivity is also highest for those with poorer qualifications. These results highlight the need for the MOD to encourage and upskill their serving personnel while still in service: although these participants served for many years and have therefore built up a wealth of experience, this experience is often overlooked or misunderstood in the civilian labour market, whereas recognised qualifications appear to count more.

The most common industries employing veteran SNCOs are Education, Telecommunications and IT, Defence, Security, Engineering, the NHS and Transport. Many of these are linked to veteran SNCOs' time in the military, building upon existing skills, qualifications and experience.

In terms of enablers to employment, over 90% of veteran SNCOs mentioned their 'ability to cope under pressure', 'ability to cope with the unexpected' and 'ability to persevere and see things through to the end'. RAF veteran SNCOs and more senior veteran SNCOs are most likely and Navy veteran SNCOs least likely to mention the most frequently mentioned enabling skills gained through Service. RAF veteran SNCOs are particularly more likely than other veteran SNCOs to mention 'ability to persevere and see things through to the end' and 'independence and independent thinking'. Whether or not RAF veteran SNCOs are relatively more successful in employment than other Services because they have these skills or because they have more transferable and desirable job-related skills and qualifications, as well as a greater closeness to civilian employment than the other two Services, is unclear. Navy veteran SNCOs appear to be the most removed from civilian employment, perhaps requiring more targeted support.

When examining the challenges faced while in employment, RAF veteran SNCOs again appear to find issues to be less of a challenge than the other Services. A greater proportion of Army veteran SNCOs found an inability to adapt to a civilian environment to be a serious challenge, as well as an inability to make as much money as expected and negative attitudes from work colleagues. More Army veteran SNCOs reported mental health issues to be extremely or very challenging and more than a quarter of Navy veteran SNCOs reported an inability to use their skills and experience to be a challenge, supporting the findings above.

Male veteran SNCOs are more likely to report lower earnings than expected as a serious challenge, whereas younger veteran SNCOs found a raft of issues to be more challenging than older veteran SNCOs. Over a quarter of younger veteran SNCOs found mental health issues to be extremely or very challenging. It is unclear whether or not mental health issues are challenging for this group during the transition phase only and (as mentioned by one veteran SNCO) it takes some time for veteran SNCOs to settle mentally into civilian life. Other mental health issues may be related to their time in Service and having seen conflict. Again, this may require targeted support while still in Service and followed up closely after transition.

When veteran SNCOs were successful in gaining employment, there were other difficulties related to a difference in work culture and work ethic, different management styles and a perceived lack of commitment in civvy street. Many had either left jobs because they were unhappy or had lost their jobs. Moving from job to job was relatively common: this could be an advantage, allowing the veteran SNCO to build up experience and new skills, although the salary was often poor and well below initial expectations, a cause for concern among many

participants. There was evidence of adaptation among many veteran SNCOs over time, whereby they would learn to change their language and humour, which were perceived to be inappropriate or misunderstood by civilians.

A loss of identity and status appear to be particular issues for veteran SNCOs when transitioning out of the Services. This is linked to length of time in Service, as many veteran SNCOs have been in for well over 20 years. A more targeted approach to support for those senior veteran SNCOs who have been in Service for longer periods of time may be required. Differences in outcomes and challenges by Service and by gender also need to be taken into account, however.

The following case study highlights some of the issues faced over the longer-term in civilian life by a former SNCO from the RAF.

Case study 5

<p>Background and current circumstances</p>
<p>K was a former Warrant Officer who left the RAF at the end of his contract, with a pension. Married and living in the North of the UK. Currently employed part time across several roles, not in highly paid roles but he indicated that money is not his greatest driver as he and his wife are mortgage/debt free.</p>
<p>Aspirations on leaving the Armed Forces</p>
<p>Initial aspirations were to have a period of leave and to then work in highly paid roles to pay his mortgage off. After achieving this goal, work became secondary and the need to find employment became less vital.</p>
<p>Support received from the military</p>
<p>K began the resettlement process approximately two years before leaving. He did not have a strong idea of what he wanted to do, but explored security, health and safety and undertook associated courses. He reflected that he hadn't quite accepted that he was leaving the military and a series of highly demanding posts both in the UK and overseas, which fell over his period of resettlement, became his focus. K found that access to face to face support was also harder being overseas and he found he had to push to get courses in the locality where he wanted to settle.</p>
<p>Any challenges experienced?</p>
<p>He found that people in the civilian world did not believe the level of responsibility that he had as a WO so he had to downgrade his experience to a low level and use examples that fitted the expectations of the employers. He also found the separation from the military difficult: <i>"You are going to feel anxiety, separation anxiety; you are going to feel lonely; you are going to have to moderate your language, your behaviour. Your ideas have to change slightly to fit, as people are not used to, and will not accept, some of the behaviours, thoughts and the way you react too; things have to be different"</i>.</p>
<p>SNCO-specific issues?</p>
<p>As a WO K was used to having status and being listened to, given his level of experience. He was proud of the high standards he had. In industry he felt that he was <i>"just another employee"</i> and he struggled to adapt to what he feels are lower levels of consideration and care. He has since found a way to gain satisfaction from the work he does and to feel that</p>

he can still achieve something by helping others “*without having to be the person at the top of the tree*”. On the positive side, he feels that SNCOs are good at making decisions and will admit when they make a mistake.

Suggestions for change/advice for other veteran SNCOs

Bring in an experienced veteran SNCO, at the level of Sgt or above, who has “*made it but failed [in the process]*” to “*tell the truth*” to those in the process of leaving, particularly in the final nine months of service. Teach coping strategies.

8. Conclusions

The following section sums up the evidence highlighted so far, according to the research objectives. We then present a series of recommendations based on the evidence gathered from all data sources.

8.1 Exploring the employment outcomes for veteran SNCOs and how these compare to other comparator groups

Veteran SNCOs from across the three Services appear to fare relatively well in terms of gaining employment after leaving. Over three-quarters of veteran SNCOs (79.8%) reported that they were currently working (either employed or self-employed, full-time or part-time). A further 8.2% were unemployed and looking for work, with a very small proportion (0.1%) unemployed but not looking for work. Those unable to work due to poor health or disability represent 4.5% of the total, and this percentage is much higher for Army veteran SNCOs than the other Services. The percentage working is highest for RAF veteran SNCOs, while the percentage unemployed is highest for Navy veteran SNCOs.

In spite of a large proportion of veteran SNCOs reporting that they had planned to undertake further study or training when they left (14.0% overall, with 22.1% of Navy veteran SNCOs), only a very small minority (0.8%) are currently undertaking further study or training full-time (they may have completed a period of training after leaving or were undertaking training part-time while working, however).

Due to the problems with existing data not differentiating between NCOs and Other Ranks, and not being able to access MOD data from the CTP, it was not possible to compare veteran SNCOs' employment outcomes with other similar groups in the civilian workforce. Although it would seem that the majority of veteran SNCOs who responded to our survey had made successful transitions into civilian employment, when we asked more probing questions on the kinds of work they were doing and the challenges faced in looking for, finding and maintaining employment, it became apparent that this group of highly-experienced veterans had faced, and in many cases were still facing, a number of difficulties in their transition from the Armed Forces.

8.2 Identifying the challenges faced in securing civilian employment among SNCOs leaving the UK Armed Forces and to highlight those aspects that are unique to this cohort

The main challenges faced by veteran SNCOs are described in detail over the different phases of resettlement (pre-resettlement, resettlement, transition and post-discharge). Challenges in the pre-resettlement phase include a reluctance by SNCOs to leave the Services: this appears to be a particular issue for those who have reached a high level of seniority within the Services but who are then required to leave in their thirties or forties when a second career is needed, unlike the Officer corps who tend to leave after a full career. Although veteran SNCOs have a good pension, this is unlikely to maintain them until retirement, and the majority want to continue working. A reluctance to leave can affect engagement with planning ahead (buying or renting a house, researching local labour markets, upskilling, etc.) and also with

resettlement courses. There are a variety of CTP courses available to all eligible personnel transitioning from the Services, and SNCOs need to engage early with what is on offer in order to be prepared.

During the resettlement phase, one of the major challenges was getting the time to do their resettlement courses, especially if they had an unsupportive Chain of Command and a very senior and responsible role which could not be easily covered (again, this would appear to be a particular issue for those SNCOs with greater levels of seniority). Other challenges in this phase included a general lack of satisfaction by some with the CTP courses, an inability for some to do resettlement courses in the area in which they had chosen to live after leaving, leading to a lack of understanding and knowledge of the local labour market, and the need for mentors in providing realistic advice for those about to leave. Another challenge outlined by SNCOs was a lack of engagement by employers throughout the resettlement process: although there are existing employer fairs and events, employers could be more proactive by providing hands-on work experience and shadowing for SNCOs.

For those in the transition phase, challenges in looking for employment in the civilian workforce include available jobs not matching current salary. SNCOs are paid relatively well and aspire to a similar middle management role upon leaving, but these are generally unavailable to veteran SNCOs or do not exist in the civilian labour market. The skills and experience of veteran SNCOs tend to be under-valued or misunderstood by potential employers and a lack of recognised qualifications means that they often find it difficult to compete with similar-aged non-veterans in the workplace, as well as Officers who are more likely to have a degree. Their age may also prove to be a disadvantage, in that employers are more willing to take on and train younger veterans but are unwilling to take a risk on those who they may perceive to be institutionalised due to their length of service and therefore unable to fit in well. There were differences in the challenges faced by Service, gender and age: RAF veteran SNCOs were more likely than veteran SNCOs in other Services to report that many of the skills learned through their time in Service had helped them in making the transition to civilian employment. Army veteran SNCOs found a lack of interview experience/skills and negative attitudes from a potential employer/employers to be very challenging, whereas Navy veteran SNCOs found an inability to sell themselves well to an employer to be challenging.

Female veteran SNCOs appeared to rate their skills and competencies more poorly overall than male veteran SNCOs, particularly their ability to promote themselves and presentation skills, good networks/networking skills and digital/IT skills. They were also more likely to report a lack of self-confidence, lack of interview experience/skills, inability to sell themselves well to potential employers, and mental health issues, as extremely or very challenging. Men were more likely than women to find a lack of support from the Armed Forces transition services, negative attitudes from potential employers and a lack of relevant skills and qualifications to be challenging when seeking work, as well as available jobs matching current skills. Younger veteran SNCOs overall found these issues to be more challenging than older veteran SNCOs. Mental health issues were a challenge for many when leaving the Services, and the survey highlighted that these issues were particularly challenging for female and younger veteran SNCOs.

Longer-term challenges include an inability to work due to poor health or disability, which was much higher for Army veteran SNCOs than the other Services. Figures on qualifications and

employment demonstrated that the higher the level of educational qualification, the higher the percentage in work (full-time employment also declines along with the highest level of qualification, and inactivity is highest for those with poorer qualifications). Again, those who have invested in training and upskilling during their time in Service are less likely to suffer the same kinds of difficulties when entering the labour market.

As with the transition phase, RAF veteran SNCOs again appear to find issues while in work to be less of a challenge than the other Services, whereas a greater proportion of Army veteran SNCOs found an inability to adapt to a civilian environment to be a serious challenge, as well as an inability to make as much money as expected and negative attitudes from work colleagues. Other Service differences included more Army veteran SNCOs reporting mental health issues to be challenging, while more than a quarter of Navy veteran SNCOs reported an inability to use their skills and experience to be a challenge.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, men were more likely than women to report lower earnings than expected as a serious challenge, whereas younger veteran SNCOs found many issues while in work to be more challenging than older veteran SNCOs, including mental health issues, where over a quarter of younger veteran SNCOs found this to be challenging.

Other challenges identified when veteran SNCOs were in employment include a difference in work culture and work ethic, different management styles and a perceived lack of commitment by civilians. A loss of identity and status appear to be a particular issue for SNCOs when transitioning out of the Services. This is linked to length of time in Service, as many have been in the Armed Forces for over 20 years. Those in more senior roles within the Services are also more likely to suffer from a lack of status upon leaving, given their recognition and greater levels of responsibility.

8.3 Recommendations on how these challenges might be addressed

A series of recommendations are set out in Figure 8.1 in order to achieve a successful transition, defined by the veteran SNCOs themselves as: being happy and content with their situation; having enough money; enjoying work; and having a good work-life balance. These recommendations relate to the different phases of resettlement, as set out above and in the previous sections, but are also aimed at particular groups: veteran SNCOs, the MOD, employers and military charities. Figure 8.2 outlines when the particular recommendations should be implemented.

Veteran SNCOs

- To maximise their opportunities at the end of their military careers, SNCOs need to take advantage of opportunities to upskill and reskill while still in the Services to ensure they are ready for the civilian labour market.
- The pre-transition phase for an SNCO should include self-directed planning and research to develop a realistic view about employment and life beyond the Services.
- To improve the transition experience, SNCOs should engage with the resettlement process and prioritise their resettlement over their job.

- SNCOs should engage fully with any mental health support offered before and after leaving, as well as avoid negative behaviours.
- As part of the pre-transition phase, SNCOs should accept that they are leaving and be ready to move on, which means taking advantage of skills, such as adaptability and resilience, developed during their time in the military.
- To support their transition from the military, SNCOs should explore ways in which to expand their networks (both informal and formal) beyond the military.
- With a view to improving their employment prospects, SNCOs need to explore and learn about local labour market opportunities and recognise where jobs are located, possibly be prepared to commute or move to where jobs are available, and use intermediate jobs as ‘stepping stones’.

MOD

- With a view to improving the transition experience of SNCOs, the MOD should help SNCOs to detach from the military and accept that they are leaving. They should explore making mental health and practical advice workshops (or drop-in sessions) compulsory before leaving, as well as providing access to refresher courses after two years if a veteran SNCO is unemployed and/or in need of additional support.
- The MOD and Commanding Officers should ensure that SNCOs are provided with time to complete resettlement courses and consider a ‘transition’ role two years before leaving.
- To strengthen the CTP offer and ensure it fits with current labour market demands, and to recognise and reward greater length of service and seniority, the MOD should consider providing bespoke sessions for the most senior SNCOs, especially sessions on networking, interview techniques and adapting behaviours, as well as arranging talks by potential employers and ex-SNCOs from a similar background. Other bespoke sessions may need to be considered for female SNCOs and for Navy SNCOs.
- To improve the support already available to veteran SNCOs, the MOD should consider the delivery of support over the longer-term to ensure accessibility and availability to all beyond the current two years of support.
- The MOD, in collaboration with charities and employers, should better manage the expectations of SNCOs in terms of the roles available to them in the civilian labour market, the qualifications and skills required, and likely salaries.
- Throughout the career of an SNCO, the MOD should be providing advice on upskilling and retraining to ensure their workforce is up-to-date, but is also ready for the civilian labour market.
- To improve the transition experience of SNCOs, the MOD should ensure resettlement support is provided at the local level, where possible, so it is relevant to SNCOs’ choice of location after leaving.
- The MOD should support military spouses/partners to find and maintain work, and treat transition at the family level.

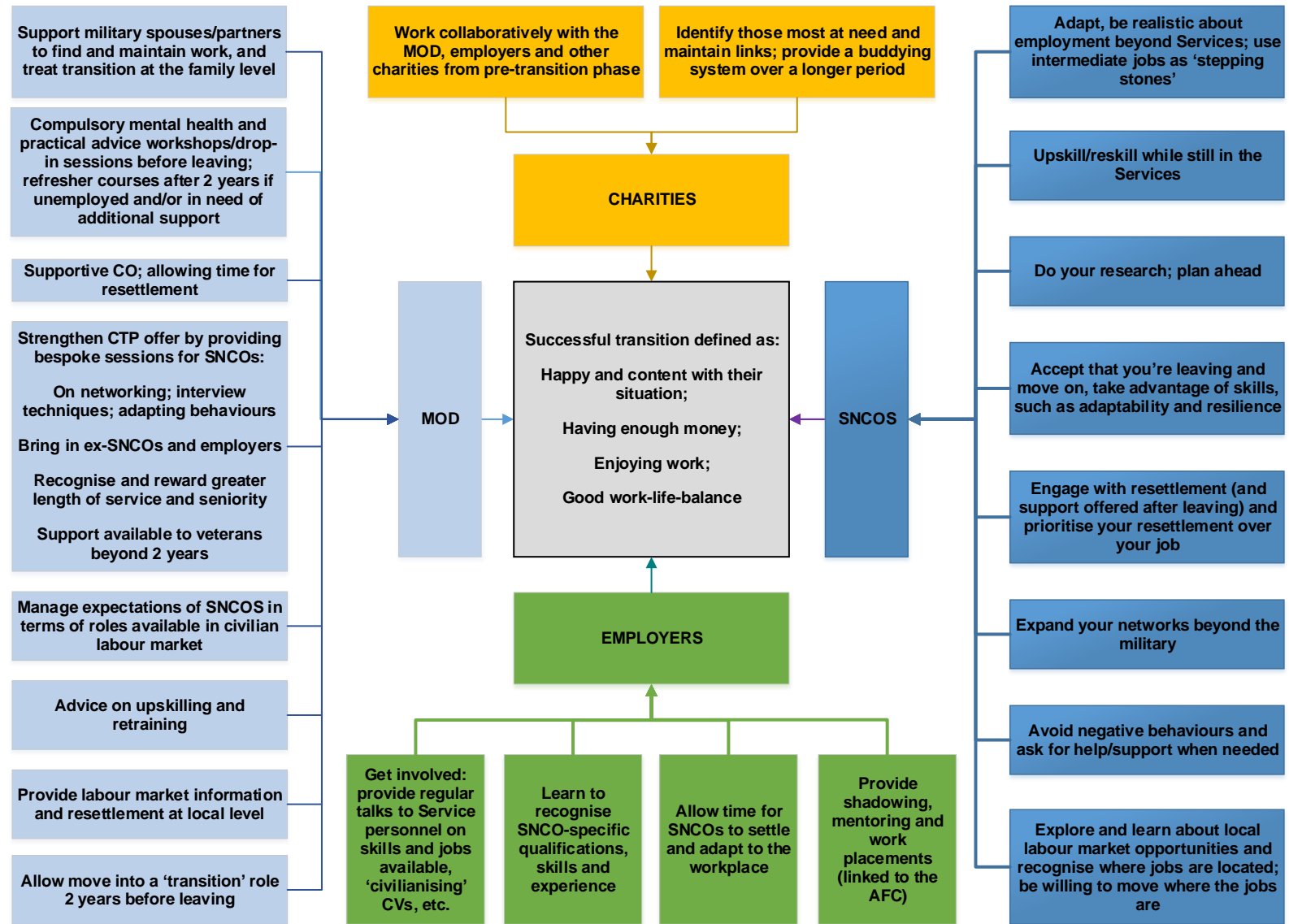
Charities

- Charities, in consultation and collaboration with the MOD, employers and other charities, should work together to explore how SNCOs can be supported during the pre-transition phase and beyond, perhaps providing support on different topics on a staggered, more manageable basis.
- To support those in most need of help, charities need to be able to identify the most vulnerable individuals, maintain links with them and establish a buddy system so that support is available over a longer period.

Employers

- With a view to improving collaborations with the MOD, employers should get involved at all stages of an SNCO's transition from the military to civilian life by providing, for example, regular talks to Service personnel on skills and jobs available, help with 'civilianising' CVs, interview techniques, etc. There may also be a need for wider advertising and advance notice of employment fairs and company events.
- Through greater collaboration and work with SNCOs and the MOD, employers can learn to recognise SNCO-specific qualifications, skills and experience and how these can be of benefit to their organisation and sector.
- For those employers recruiting veteran SNCOs, there should be recognition and support to allow them to settle and adapt to the workplace.
- Through the Armed Forces Covenant, and linked to Bronze, Silver and Gold award criteria, employers should offer a range of opportunities, such as workplace shadowing, mentoring and work placements, to support SNCOs during the pre- and post-transition phase.

Figure 8.1: Overview of recommendations



8.4 Timeline for support

The timeline, presented in Figure 8.2, starts well before the leaving date (indicated by 0 years on the timeline) highlighting the need for SNCOs to start preparing to leave long before the end of their military career. A number of veteran SNCOs had reflected on their experiences, noting that they wished they had not left everything to the last few months, such as trying to get civilian qualifications, getting existing qualifications mapped to civilian qualifications, engaging in CTP courses, job hunting in order to understand the labour market and the opportunities available to them, and preparing a CV.

Four years before leaving the military, it is suggested that the MoD should be forward planning the SNCO's last posting to ensure they support the SNCO's transition. At this point, it is recommended that the SNCOs start to consider locations to settle after leaving the services.

At two years before the leaving date, significant preparations for leaving the Services should begin, with Commanding Officers providing support, and SNCOs proactively engaging with opportunities. Additionally, employers, through the Armed Forces Covenant, could also be providing opportunities such as work experience or placements for SNCOs with the aim of helping them understand the civilian labour market. These opportunities also provide the SNCO a 'taster' of a job role, sector or workplace.

After leaving the services, the MOD and employers still have a role to play in supporting an SNCO's transition to civilian life. Much of the evidence presented highlights that SNCOs have a particularly difficult time and require sustained support over a longer period. The timeline, therefore, extends beyond two years after the SNCO has left the Services. It recognises that there is still a duty of care.

Figure 8.2: Timeline of action to support transitions from the military

Timeline	SNCO	MoD	Employers	Charities
- 4 yrs	Engage with education opportunities to gain skills and qualifications	Provide ongoing advice on upskilling and retraining		
	Consider where/how you live after leaving the Services, e.g. buying or renting a property	Forward planning role for resettlement (last posting should be relevant to civilian sector)	Collaborate with MOD and get involved at all stages of an SNCO's transition from military	Collaborate with the MOD, employers and other charities to explore how SNCOs can be supported during the pre-transition phase and beyond
- 2 yrs	Upskill and renew qualifications	Support military spouses find and maintain work and treat transition at family level	Potential employers engage with SNCOs help with 'civilianising' CVs, interview techniques, etc.	
	Search for jobs, training courses, etc. and research labour market	CO support and time for SNCO to do resettlement		
- 6 mths	Engage with resettlement offer			
	Build up informal and formal networks with veterans and employers	Enhance CTP offering and provide at local level, where possible, so relevant to SNCOs choice of location after leaving	Support CTP offering by talking to SNCO about employment opportunities	
		Provide compulsory workshop on leaving the military, finding work and mental health	Provide mentoring, work shadowing and placement opportunities	
	Find a job before leaving	Provide opportunities for veteran SNCOs to talk with those leaving Services		
0 yrs			Employers recruiting SNCOs should provide support and allow them to settle	Support those in most need of help and maintain links with them
	Identify useful courses, update CV and interview skills		Employers to recognise and understand skills and experience of SNCOs with support from MoD	Establish a buddy system so support is available over a longer period
	Expand networks		Continue to provide mentoring, work shadowing and placement opportunities	
2 yrs		Provide access to refresher courses for those who are unemployed and/or need additional support		
	Access ongoing courses and support	Provide regular support and check-in points (buddy system)		
	Seek help if required	Offer 'refresher' resettlement training for those post 2 years		
	Continue to develop and engage with opportunities			

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Appendices

A.1 Approach to the literature review

The aim of the literature review was to determine ‘what evidence is there on the experiences of SNCOs transitioning from the military into civilian life?’. The review sought evidence for all three Services in the UK, but the most relevant evidence was found for the Marines and the Army. Whilst no time limits were set for the review, evidence was reviewed and assessed in terms of relevance to the current context. International evidence (from, for example, Canada and USA) was also reviewed and similarly assessed in terms of relevance and transferability of findings. Evidence was reviewed thematically.

A search of extant literature from academic and policy databases was undertaken. A systematic search strategy was used to provide a robust framework within which to conduct a transparent and comprehensive review. This framework enabled searches to be tracked to determine which terms yielded the most relevant results, so additional searches could be refined and targeted. This literature provides evidence to support and expand on the findings from this study. The approach to the review can be described in five phases:

- Setting review parameters: refining review question, defining keywords and developing search strategy;
- Searching: systematic identification of potentially relevant evidence using the keyword strategy;
- Data extraction: in-depth examination and assessment of evidence;
- Analysis and synthesis: development of a framework for analysis, analysis of evidence and identification of key themes;
- Reporting: review findings are merged with primary evidence from the study.

The following provides an overview of the search strategy developed and applied to a number of databases via the University of Warwick library and partner organisations:

Keyword 1	Keyword 2	Additional search terms
senior non-commissioned officer	military	military transition to employment
SNCO	airforce	military transition to civilian life
non-commissioned officer	Armed Forces	second career of military
senior NCO	army	employment transition
warrant officer	ex-military	transition to civilian workforce
master aircrew	ex-service personnel	
colour sergeant	forces	
staff sergeant	marine	
chief petty officer	navy	
flight sergeant	Royal Air Force	
chief technician	veterans	
sergeant		
petty officer		

This search strategy was applied to five databases (Emerald, PsycINFO/PsycARTICLE, Sage, Science Direct, Wiley) and two platforms EBSCO, Proquest ABI), which enabled access to a further 12 databases. Evidence from previous reviews in the military field were also searched. This search was supplemented with a review of selected UK websites and international websites. As with previous reviews focussed on the military, there were low return rates in the database searches, so all returned evidence was reviewed and analysed. All potentially relevant evidence was managed in a bibliographic software programme.

In total, there were 2,424 search results screened by title from across the databases and other sources, of which:

- 185 texts were reviewed in full; and
- 20 were specific to SNCOs transitioning to civilian employment and included in the final review.

Table A1.1: Overview of literature review search results

Search results screened by title	2,424
Evidence from academic databases	66
Evidence from other sources screened	120
Evidence from websites (including grey literature)	65
Search results screened by full text	250
Exclusions	
conducted pre-1997	53
duplicates deleted from database	12
not based on empirical research or focused on single person opinion	0
focused on the military transitions to civilian workforce, but did not mention SNCOs	59
not focused on the military transitions to civilian workforce	105
research thesis	1
unobtainable	0
Total excluded	230
Total included in review	20

In a number of studies, Rank was one of a number of variables reported on, so evidence specific to SNCOs is limited. It should also be noted that quantitative studies that analysed large datasets often did not disaggregate their findings to SNCO, opting for 'officer', 'other ranks', 'NCO' and 'enlisted'. The review was further complicated by the variety of terms used for SNCO and to aggregate data for other ranks with SNCO. For example, some terms used

include non-commissioned member of the military, NCO, E7-E9, Warrant Officer and others, and mid-career non-commissioned officer. To extend the review, evidence on long-serving military personnel was also reviewed, as this is a good proxy for SNCOs who are more likely to have served for over 15 years.

A.2 Demographic details and survey findings

Figure A2.1: Veteran SNCOs by former service branch in the UK and nearby countries

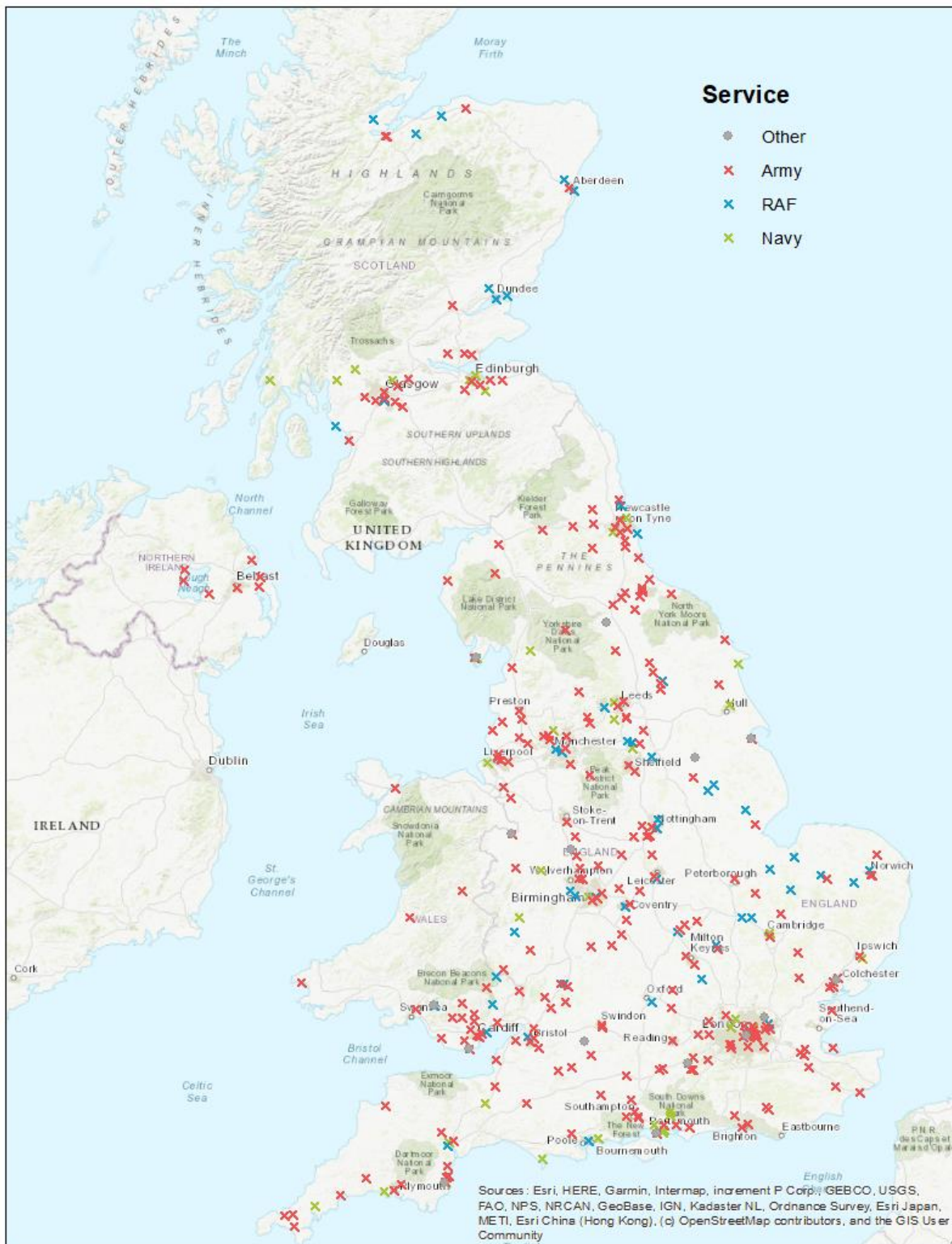


Figure A2.2: Veteran SNCOs by former service branch in Europe and the Middle East

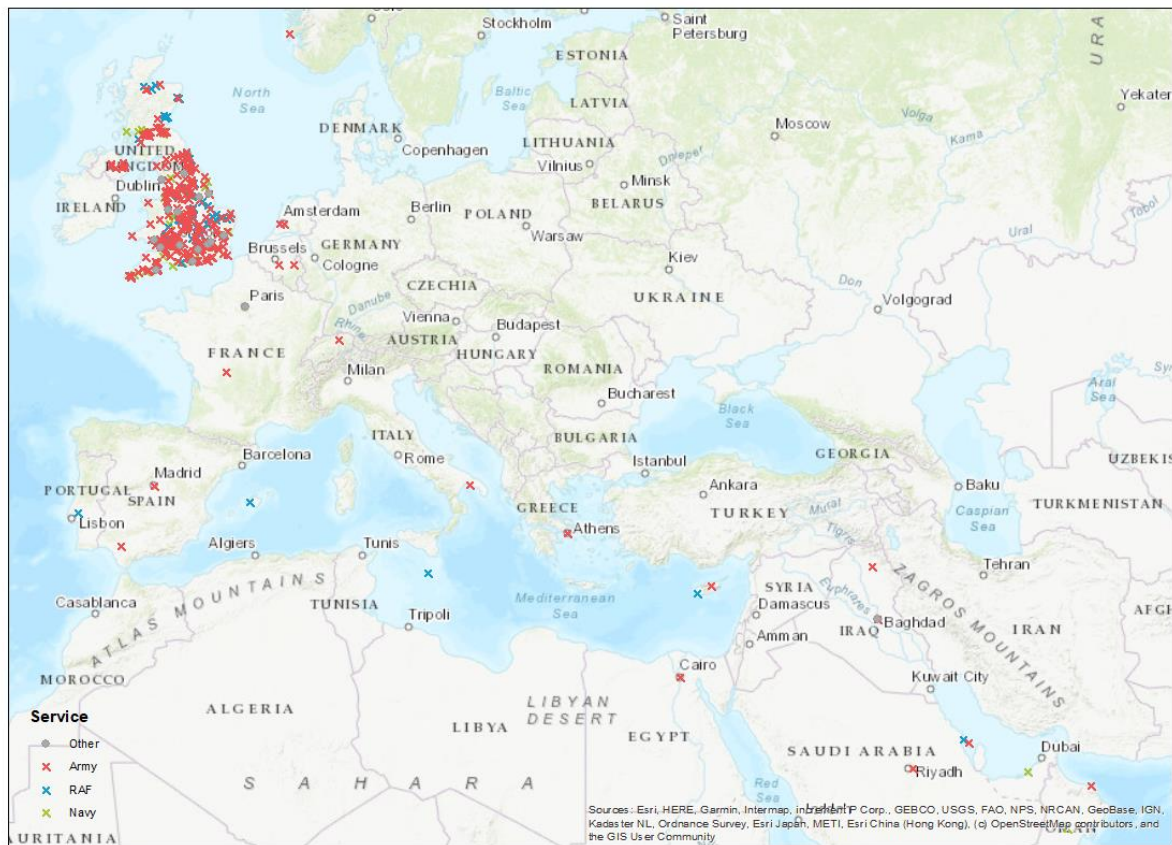


Table A2.1: Service and seniority

Service	More senior (Warrant Officers)	Less senior	All	Percent of total
Royal Navy	7	81	88	11.2%
Royal Marines	3	6	9	1.1%
Army	269	272	541	68.7%
RAF	17	132	149	18.9%
Total	296	491	787	100.0%
Percent of total	37.6%	62.4%	100.0%	

Table A2.2: Age and gender breakdown of respondents

Age group	Male	Female	Prefer not to say	Total	Percent of total
30-39 years	20	6	0	26	4.7%
40-49 years	201	25	1	227	41.0%
50-59 years	240	11	1	252	45.6%
60 plus	47	1	0	48	8.7%
All ages	508	43	2	553	100.0%
Percent of total	91.9%	7.8%	0.4%	100.0%	

Table A2.3: Years served by branch of Armed Forces

Years	Navy	Army	RAF	All
6 to 14.99	15.8	9.3	4.9	9.3
15 to 21.99	11.6	15.6	12.6	14.5
22 to 25.99	51.6	62.4	49.0	58.5
26 to 29.99	14.7	8.9	14.0	10.6
30 or more	6.3	3.8	19.6	7.1
Total	95	526	143	764

Table A2.4: Years served by seniority

Years	More senior	Less senior	All
6 to 14.99	0.7	14.5	9.3
15 to 21.99	5.6	20.0	14.5
22 to 25.99	69.1	52.1	58.5
26 to 29.99	13.5	8.8	10.6
30 or more	11.1	4.6	7.1
Total	288	476	764

Table A2.5: Years since leaving the military

Years	N	%	Cumulative %
0-3	194	25.4%	25.4%
4-7	202	26.4%	51.8%
8-12	141	18.5%	70.3%
13-20	144	18.9%	89.1%
21+	83	10.8%	100%

Total	764	100%	
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Table A2.6: Percentage reporting when support was best received by type, gender and age group (multiple options possible)

	Gender		Age group				Total
	Male	Female	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-59 years	60 plus	
More than 2 years before leaving	50.2	36.8	50.0	48.1	49.4	51.1	49.1
1-2 years before leaving	42.7	55.3	57.7	48.1	40.1	34.0	43.7
6-12 months before leaving	22.2	28.9	30.8	22.7	23.5	14.9	22.8
1 to 5 months before leaving; around the time of leaving	13.1	18.4	19.2	13.0	13.8	10.6	13.4
1 to 5 months after leaving; 6-12 months after leaving	14.9	31.6	23.1	17.6	16.2	6.4	16.2
1-2 years after leaving	22.8	42.1	42.3	23.6	23.9	19.1	24.3
more than 2 years after leaving	20.4	28.9	34.6	27.3	17.0	4.3	20.9
Responses	496	38	26	216	247	47	536

Table A2.7: Percentage receiving support by type, service branch and seniority

Type of support	Service			Level of SNCO		Total
	Navy	Army	RAF	More senior	Less senior	
Careers advice and guidance	100.0	99.2	98.7	99.3	99.1	99.2
Mentoring and/or coaching	51.1	65.1	47.5	63.4	57.5	59.8
Information on employment opportunities	93.5	89.1	86.8	92.1	87.5	89.2
Information on education and/or training opportunities	87.2	90.7	87.5	92.9	87.6	89.6
Funding for further education and/or retraining	91.1	83.8	89.7	90.0	83.4	86.0
Information on volunteering opportunities or the Volunteer Reserve Force	64.4	72.0	57.6	70.2	67.0	68.2
Information on becoming self-employed or setting up own business	51.1	70.1	54.8	69.9	61.0	64.5
Training on becoming self-employed or setting up own business	46.7	60.4	42.6	56.7	53.9	55.0
Links to local networks of veterans	59.1	60.6	41.0	56.5	56.9	56.7
Links or information on local support (such as from veteran charities)	37.8	37.1	48.3	38.9	39.6	39.3
Other (please specify)	100.0	54.5	40.0	38.5	66.7	53.6

Table A2.8: Percentage receiving support by type, gender and age group

Type of support	Gender		Age group				Total
	Male	Female	30-39 yrs	40-49 yrs	50-59 yrs	60 plus	
Careers advice and guidance	99.3	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.3	95.7	99.4
Mentoring and/or coaching	59.0	54.5	53.3	66.7	51.9	42.1	58.5
Information on employment opportunities	89.6	79.2	92.9	91.3	85.0	86.4	88.4
Information on education and/or training opportunities	90.1	71.4	100.0	90.4	85.3	85.0	88.5
Funding for further education and/or retraining	87.0	72.7	86.7	88.4	85.1	68.4	85.7
Information on volunteering opportunities or the Volunteer Reserve Force	68.2	61.9	73.3	73.3	64.2	42.1	67.6
Information on becoming self-employed or setting up own business	63.1	75.0	46.7	67.2	67.9	36.8	64.3
Training on becoming self-employed or setting up own business	53.0	70.0	46.7	60.9	51.9	31.6	54.5
Links to local networks of veterans	55.6	61.9	53.3	62.0	49.6	52.6	56.0
Links or information on local support (such as from veteran charities)	40.6	38.1	40.0	30.4	51.9	47.4	40.4
Other (please specify)	50.0	100.0	-	46.7	80.0	33.3	52.2

Table A2.9: Percentage satisfied with support by type, service branch and seniority

Type of support	Service			Level of SNCO		Total
	Navy	Army	RAF	More senior	Less senior	
Careers advice and guidance	20.0	26.1	11.7	18.0	24.8	22.2
Mentoring and/or coaching	43.5	34.1	17.9	28.2	36.0	32.8
Information on employment opportunities	30.2	29.6	15.3	31.0	24.2	26.8
Information on education and/or training opportunities	24.4	29.1	14.3	23.9	26.7	25.6
Funding for further education and/or retraining	22.0	28.7	13.1	23.9	24.7	24.4
Information on volunteering opportunities or the Volunteer Reserve Force	13.8	20.8	20.6	19.5	20.0	19.8
Information on becoming self-employed or setting up own business	21.7	22.3	5.9	18.6	20.2	19.5
Training on becoming self-employed or setting up own business	38.1	26.4	3.8	20.6	26.9	24.4
Links to local networks of veterans	30.8	41.0	32.0	39.2	37.8	38.4
Links or information on local support (such as from veteran charities)	35.7	37.3	12.9	37.7	30.2	33.2
Other (please specify)	-	25.0	50.0	40.0	20.0	26.7

Table A2.10: Percentage satisfied with support by type, gender and age group

Type of support	Gender		Age group				Total
	Male	Female	30-39 yrs	40-49 yrs	50-59 yrs	60 plus	
Careers advice and guidance	24.0	16.0	53.3	19.4	24.8	22.7	23.6
Mentoring and/or coaching	37.2	16.7	37.5	33.3	38.2	37.5	35.4
Information on employment opportunities	27.5	15.8	38.5	21.4	32.4	21.1	26.5
Information on education and/or training opportunities	24.9	20.0	33.3	22.1	29.3	11.8	24.9
Funding for further education and/or retraining	25.9	18.8	15.4	23.0	32.0	7.7	25.3
Information on volunteering opportunities or the Volunteer Reserve Force	20.1	30.8	36.4	14.1	27.1	-	20.7
Information on becoming self-employed or setting up own business	21.1	0.0	42.9	15.6	21.6	14.3	19.1
Training on becoming self-employed or setting up own business	26.9	14.3	42.9	23.5	26.8	16.7	25.3
Links to local networks of veterans	41.4	38.5	50.0	42.4	42.9	10.0	40.9
Links or information on local support (such as from veteran charities)	34.4	30.8	22.2	33.0	40.4	20.0	33.9
Other (please specify)	36.4	-	-	14.3	75.0	-	33.3

Table A2.11: Percentage reporting skills and competencies gained through Service that helped in making the transition to civilian employment by service and seniority

Skill/competence	Service			Level of SNCO		Total
	Navy	Army	RAF	More senior	Less senior	
Leadership skills	86.3	85.0	90.8	88.7	84.9	86.3
Management skills	77.5	83.4	85.0	85.7	81.3	82.9
Organisational skills	86.3	90.0	95.8	91.3	90.3	90.7
Communication skills	78.8	86.9	94.2	88.3	86.7	87.3
Team-working	83.8	86.7	91.7	88.3	86.7	87.3
Decision-making skills	86.3	85.5	87.5	86.6	85.6	86.0
Commercial awareness	2.5	10.9	9.2	12.6	7.7	9.5
Financial awareness	3.8	17.1	13.3	23.4	9.5	14.7
Good networks/networking skills	27.5	29.5	37.5	32.9	29.5	30.8
Digital/IT skills	37.5	41.3	41.7	44.2	39.0	40.9
Understanding how to translate and/or apply military skills to civilian context	35.0	34.7	39.2	37.7	34.4	35.6
Marketing skills	6.3	5.5	4.2	5.6	5.1	5.3
Ability to promote yourself	47.5	50.8	48.3	55.0	46.9	49.9
Presentation skills	65.0	72.4	70.8	75.8	68.5	71.2
Other (please specify)	7.5	9.0	7.5	9.1	8.2	8.5
Total	80	421	120	231	390	621

Table A2.12: Percentage reporting skills and competencies gained through Service that helped in making the transition to civilian employment by type, gender and age group

Skill/competence	Gender		Age group				Total
	Male	Female	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-59 years	60 plus	
Leadership skills	86.2	87.2	83.3	84.8	89.4	78.7	86.3
Management skills	83.6	74.4	79.2	80.2	87.8	72.3	82.9
Organisational skills	91.5	82.1	87.5	89.4	92.7	89.4	90.8
Communication skills	88.6	82.1	79.2	86.6	90.6	87.2	88.2
Team-working	88.0	87.2	75.0	86.6	91.0	85.1	88.0
Decision-making skills	87.2	74.4	75.0	82.9	90.6	83.0	86.1
Commercial awareness	9.1	10.3	16.7	9.7	7.3	12.8	9.2
Financial awareness	15.2	12.8	12.5	14.3	16.3	12.8	15.0
Good networks/networking skills	31.2	23.1	37.5	28.6	31.8	29.8	30.6
Digital/IT skills	42.6	33.3	45.8	41.0	43.3	36.2	41.8
Understanding how to translate and/or apply military skills to civilian context	35.3	33.3	29.2	28.6	39.6	44.7	35.1
Marketing skills	5.3	7.7	4.2	4.1	5.7	10.6	5.4
Ability to promote yourself	51.1	33.3	54.2	45.2	52.7	53.2	49.7
Presentation skills	73.8	46.2	62.5	66.8	76.3	76.6	71.9
Other (please specify)	9.9	5.1	0.0	12.4	6.1	19.1	9.6
Total	493	39	24	217	245	47	533

Table A2.13: Percentage finding an issue “extremely challenging” or “very challenging” when seeking employment by gender and age

Issue	Gender		Age group				Total
	Male	Female	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-59 years	60 plus	
Lack of support from Armed Forces transition services	32.7	20.9	30.8	30.0	31.7	39.6	31.6
Lack of support from military charities	18.1	23.3	19.2	16.3	17.5	33.3	18.4
Lack of support from family, friends or local community	6.1	11.6	19.2	8.8	4.4	0.0	6.5
Negative attitudes from a potential employer/employers	32.5	27.9	26.9	31.3	32.9	35.4	32.2
Lack of relevant skills	28.1	11.6	38.5	28.6	24.2	25.0	26.8
Lack of relevant qualifications	31.1	14.0	23.1	27.8	31.7	31.3	29.7
Lack of self-confidence	10.6	23.3	19.2	13.2	10.3	6.3	11.6
Lack of information about job opportunities	26.4	23.3	42.3	26.4	23.0	31.3	26.0
Lack of interview experience/skills	30.9	41.9	42.3	36.1	26.2	35.4	31.8
Inability to sell myself well to an employer (either in an application or in an interview)	23.2	30.2	30.8	27.8	20.2	20.8	23.9
Inability to translate my skills from the Services into a civilian environment	36.4	30.2	50.0	39.2	32.1	33.3	36.0
Available jobs not matching my current skills	37.2	27.9	50.0	37.4	34.9	31.3	36.3
Available jobs not matching my current salary	44.1	41.9	50.0	46.3	41.7	41.7	43.9
Reluctance to ask for help	25.8	25.6	19.2	26.9	25.4	27.1	25.9
Physical health/disability issues	13.2	16.3	19.2	11.5	14.7	12.5	13.4
Mental health issues	15.7	23.3	26.9	19.8	11.5	20.8	16.5
Criminal record	1.2	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.8	2.1	1.1
Other (please specify)	3.1	2.3	3.8	2.6	3.2	4.2	3.1

Table A2.14: Future plans when leaving services by branch of Armed Forces

Intention	Service (%)			All	
	Navy	Army	RAF	Number	Percent
Continue working	90.5	87.8	91.6	677	88.8
Undertake a period of further training or study	22.1	13.5	10.5	107	14.0
Take a career break or a temporary break from employment	5.3	5.5	4.2	40	5.2
Look after home and/or family	4.2	4.0	5.6	33	4.3
Recuperate from injury or illness	3.2	6.9	2.8	43	5.6
Retire	2.1	0.8	2.8	10	1.3
Other (please specify)	5.3	2.7	2.1	22	2.9
Total	95	524	143	762	762

NB: Percentages may sum to more than 100%

Table A2.15: Future plans when leaving services by gender and age group

Intention	Gender (%)		Age (%)				All	
	Male	Female	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-59 years	60 plus	Number	Percent
Continue working	91.1	76.7	88.5	87.2	91.7	95.8	498	90.1
Undertake a period of further training or study	15.4	18.6	11.5	15.9	14.7	20.8	86	15.6
Take a career break or a temporary break from employment	5.3	4.7	7.7	7.5	4.0	0.0	29	5.2
Look after home and/or family	3.7	9.3	3.8	7.0	2.0	2.1	23	4.2
Recuperate from injury or illness	4.5	9.3	11.5	5.7	2.4	10.4	27	4.9
Retire	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.9	2.0	0.0	7	1.3
Other (please specify)	2.8	7.0	0.0	3.1	3.6	2.1	17	3.1
Total	508	43	26	227	252	48	553	553

NB: Percentages may sum to more than 100%

Table A2.16: Future plans when leaving services by seniority and time since leaving the Armed Forces

Plans after leaving Armed Forces	Seniority (%)		Total (%)
	More senior	Less senior	
Continue working	88.5	89.1	88.8
Undertake a period of further training or study	10.8	16.0	14.0
Take a career break or a temporary break from employment	5.2	5.3	5.2
Look after home and/or family	4.9	4.0	4.3
Recuperate from injury or illness	5.2	5.9	5.6
Retire	1.0	1.5	1.3
Other	3.1	2.7	2.9
Total	287	475	762

NB: Percentages may sum to more than 100%

Table A2.17: Labour market status by gender and age

Status	Gender (%)		Age (%)				All	
	Male	Female	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-59 years	60 plus	Number	Percent
In paid employment full-time	65.7	53.5	61.5	72.2	65.1	31.3	359	64.9
In paid employment part-time	5.3	11.6	3.8	4.4	6.0	12.5	32	5.8
Self-employed/own a business while also undertaking paid employment	3.3	0.0	0.0	3.1	2.8	6.3	17	3.1
Self-employed or own a business only	5.3	0.0	3.8	4.4	5.6	4.2	27	4.9
In voluntary employment	0.2	4.7	0.0	0.9	0.4	0.0	3	0.5
Training or studying full-time	0.6	0.0	3.8	0.0	0.8	0.0	3	0.5
Unemployed and looking for work	7.9	7.0	15.4	6.6	7.1	12.5	43	7.8
Unemployed and not looking for work	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	1	0.2
Unable to work through disability or health issues	4.5	14.0	3.8	4.8	4.8	10.4	29	5.2
Looking after the home or family full-time	0.6	2.3	0.0	1.3	0.4	0.0	4	0.7
Retired	3.5	2.3	0.0	0.0	3.6	20.8	19	3.4
Other	2.8	4.7	7.7	2.2	3.2	2.1	16	2.9
Total (100%)	508	43	26	227	252	48	553	553
Percentage working	79.9	69.8	69.2	85.0	79.8	54.2	438	79.2
Percentage inactive	11.6	23.3	11.5	8.4	12.3	33.3	69	12.5
Percent not sought work	2.0	11.6	0.0	4.4	1.6	2.1	15	2.7

Table A2.18: Labour market status by seniority and time since leaving Armed Forces

Labour market status	Seniority (%)		Total (%)
	More senior	Less senior	
In paid employment full-time	66.2	66.2	66.2
In paid employment part-time	4.9	6.3	5.8
Self-employed/own a business while also undertaking paid employment	1.7	3.4	2.8
Self-employed or own a business only	6.3	4.2	5.0
In voluntary employment	0.3	0.6	0.5
Training or studying full-time	0.7	0.8	0.8
Unemployed and looking for work	6.3	9.3	8.2
Unemployed and not looking for work	0.0	0.2	0.1
Unable to work through disability or health issues	6.3	3.4	4.5
Looking after the home or family full-time	0.0	1.1	0.7
Retired	3.1	3.2	3.2
Other	4.2	1.3	2.4
Total (100%)	287	473	760
Percentage working	79.4	80.8	80.3
Percentage inactive	13.6	9.1	10.8
Percent not sought work	21.1	5.3	11.3

Table A2.19: Paid hours worked and attitudes to working more or less paid hours by seniority and time since leaving Armed Forces

Hours worked	Seniority (%)		Total (%)
	More senior	Less senior	
0	1.7	0.5	1.0
1-12	0.8	1.1	1.0
13-19	1.3	3.2	2.4
20-30	6.3	4.8	5.4
30-40	47.3	45.9	46.4
40-50	32.1	35.0	33.9
50 plus	10.5	9.5	9.9
Total	237	377	614
Want to work more hours (%)			
Much more	4.7	4.0	4.3
A bit more	7.3	5.3	6.1
About the same	46.2	46.4	46.3
A bit less	35.0	34.1	34.5
Much less	6.8	10.1	8.9
Total	234	375	609

Table A2.20: Percentage reporting skills and competencies gained through Service that helped them while in civilian employment by type, gender and age group

	Gender		Age group				Total
	Male	Female	30-39 yrs	40-49 yrs	50-59 yrs	60 plus	
Managing risks or risk tolerance	76.7	65.8	70.8	74.8	78.0	69.6	75.7
Resilience	85.5	76.3	75.0	85.5	85.0	84.8	84.7
Ability to try new things	82.9	86.8	79.2	83.6	81.7	87.0	82.8
Ability to cope under pressure	94.7	92.1	95.8	94.4	94.3	95.7	94.5
Ability to cope with the unexpected	92.2	86.8	95.8	92.1	91.1	93.5	91.9
Ability to persevere and see things through to the end	90.0	92.1	95.8	88.3	91.5	89.1	90.2
Independence and independent thinking	84.1	92.1	91.7	84.6	85.0	78.3	84.5
Self-confidence	88.0	73.7	87.5	84.6	88.2	91.3	87.0
Other (please specify)	4.5	2.6	0.0	3.7	4.5	8.7	4.3
Responses	490	38	24	214	246	46	530

Table A2.21: Percentage finding an issue “extremely challenging” or “very challenging” when in employment by gender and age

	Male	Female	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-59 years	60 plus	Total
Negative attitudes from work colleagues	23.4	20.9	23.1	24.7	23.0	18.8	23.3
Inability to make as much money as I expected	28.5	23.3	30.8	26.9	29.0	27.1	28.0
Inability to earn as much money as I need to pay bills and support myself/the family	15.0	27.9	30.8	15.0	15.5	14.6	15.9
Inability to use my skills and experience	27.8	23.3	34.6	26.9	28.2	25.0	27.7
Difficulties in adapting to a civilian environment	29.7	25.6	34.6	33.5	27.4	18.8	29.5
Difficulties in maintaining a civilian job	13.2	16.3	19.2	14.5	13.1	8.3	13.6
Inability to progress/be promoted	23.2	18.6	30.8	22.5	23.8	18.8	23.1
Not being part of a team or unit	17.3	16.3	15.4	18.9	17.5	10.4	17.4
Not being respected	23.0	18.6	15.4	22.9	22.6	27.1	22.8
Reluctance to ask for help	15.0	20.9	15.4	15.9	16.3	10.4	15.6
Physical health/disability issues	8.9	11.6	15.4	9.3	8.7	6.3	9.0
Mental health issues	13.4	16.3	26.9	15.9	9.5	18.8	13.7
Criminal record	0.4	2.3	0.0	0.9	0.0	2.1	0.5
Other (please specify)	3.0	2.3	0.0	1.8	3.6	6.3	2.9

Industry of employment

In the following tables, the top 15 industries of employment (summarising the industry descriptions provided by respondents) are presented for key characteristics of veteran senior NCOs.

Table A2.22: Industry of employment by branch of Armed Forces

Navy & Marines		Army		RAF		All	
Industry	No.	Industry	No.	Industry	No.	Industry	No.
Defence	11	Tele-communications & IT	31	Aviation	11	Education	43
Education	8	Security	29	Oil & Gas	11	Tele-communications & IT	41
Engineering	7	Education	25	Education	10	Defence	37
Charities & Voluntary Sector	4	NHS	21	Defence	7	Security	34
Tele-communications & IT	4	Transport	20	Charities & Voluntary Sector	6	Engineering	31
Transport	4	Defence	19	Construction	6	NHS	27
Financial Services	3	Engineering	19	Manufacturing	6	Transport	27
Logistics	3	Construction	18	Telecommunications & IT	6	Construction	25
Manufacturing	3	Civil Service	17	Engineering	5	Manufacturing	25
NHS	3	Logistics	17	Civil Service	3	Charities & Voluntary Sector	23
Civil Service	2	Manufacturing	16	Financial Services	3	Logistics	23
Gas, Electricity & Water	2	Gas, Electricity & Water	14	Gas, Electricity & Water	3	Civil Service	22
Police & Fire	2	Charities & Voluntary Sector	13	Logistics	3	Aviation	20
Renewable Energy	2	Railways	10	NHS	3	Gas, Electricity & Water	19

Table A2.23: Industry of employment by seniority and gender

More senior		Less senior		Male		Female	
Industry	No.	Industry	No.	Industry	No.	Industry	No.
Education	17	Telecommunications & IT	28	Education	34	Charities & Voluntary Sector	3
Security	16	Education	26	Security	29	Civil Service	3
Defence	14	Defence	23	Telecommunications & IT	28	Sport & Outdoors	3
Telecommunications & IT	13	Engineering	21	Engineering	26	Telecommunications & IT	3
NHS	12	Transport	19	Defence	25	Defence	2
Civil Service	10	Manufacturing	18	Transport	21	Financial Services	2
Engineering	10	Security	18	Construction	18	Gas, Electricity & Water	2
Retail	10	Construction	17	Logistics	17	Social Care	2
Gas, Electricity & Water	9	Aviation	16	Manufacturing	16	Aviation	1
Construction	8	Charities & Voluntary Sector	16	Charities & Voluntary Sector	15	Careers Advice	1
Transport	8	Logistics	16	Civil Service	14	Catering & Hospitality	1
Charities & Voluntary Sector	7	NHS	15	NHS	13	Consultancy	1
Logistics	7	Civil Service	12	Gas, Electricity & Water	12	Engineering	1
Manufacturing	7	Oil & Gas	12	Aviation	10	Horticulture	1

Telecommunications and Engineering are relatively more important for more junior SNCOs, and Security more common for those with a more senior rank (Table 3.2).

Table A2.24: Industry of employment by age group

Aged 30 to 39		Aged 40 to 49		Aged 50 to 59		Aged 60+	
Industry	No.	Industry	No.	Industry	No.	Industry	No.
Civil Service	2	Telecommunications & IT	17	Education	21	Education	3
Education	2	Security	14	Defence	14	NHS	3
Financial Services	2	Engineering	13	Security	13	Telecommunications & IT	3
Aviation	1	Defence	11	Engineering	12	Charities & Voluntary Sector	2
Charities & Voluntary Sector	1	Civil Service	9	Construction	11	Consultancy	2
Defence	1	Gas, Electricity & Water	9	Telecommunications & IT	10	Social Care	2
Engineering	1	Transport	9	Transport	10	Transport	2
Gas, Electricity & Water	1	Education	8	Charities & Voluntary Sector	9	Catering & Hospitality	1
Legal Services	1	Logistics	8	Local Government	8	Defence	1
Logistics	1	Manufacturing	8	Logistics	8	Engineering	1
Manufacturing	1	Construction	7	Manufacturing	8	Graphic Design	1
Medical Technology	1	Charities & Voluntary Sector	6	Oil & Gas	7	Local Government	1
NHS	1	Retail	6	Aviation	6	Property Management	1
Police & Fire	1	NHS	5	Civil Service	6	Renewable Energy	1

Table A2.25: Industry of employment by highest educational qualification

Degree or equivalent		Higher education		GCE A level or equivalent		GCSE grades A*-C or equivalent	
Industry	N o.	Industry	N o.	Industry	N o.	Industry	N o.
Education	13	Education	17	Telecommunications & IT	9	Gas, Electricity & Water	4
Defence	12	Defence	11	Engineering	7	Telecommunications & IT	4
Telecommunications & IT	8	Engineering	11	Security	6	Charities & Voluntary Sector	3
Engineering	6	Security	11	Transport	6	Defence	3
Charities & Voluntary Sector	5	Construction	9	Gas, Electricity & Water	5	Retail	3
Local Government	5	Logistics	9	Logistics	5	Security	3
Consultancy	4	Telecommunications & IT	9	Aviation	4	Engineering	2
Financial Services	4	Aviation	7	Manufacturing	4	Manufacturing	2
Manufacturing	4	Civil Service	7	NHS	4	Property Management	2
NHS	4	Transport	7	Catering & Hospitality	3	Social Care	2
Oil & Gas	4	Charities & Voluntary Sector	6	Civil Service	3	Transport	2
Civil Service	3	Manufacturing	6	Education	3	Civil Service	1
Construction	3	Railways	6	Oil & Gas	3	Local Government	1
Security	3	Training	5	Property Management	3	Logistics	1

Table A2.26: Industry of employment by length of time since leaving Armed Forces

0-2 years		3-5 years		6-9 years		10-19 years	
Industry	No.	Industry	No.	Industry	No.	Industry	No.
Defence	8	Education	10	Security	14	Education	17
Logistics	8	Telecommunications & IT	10	Education	10	Defence	14
Engineering	7	Engineering	7	Defence	9	Telecommunications & IT	12
Telecommunications & IT	7	Logistics	7	Engineering	8	Construction	11
Transport	7	Transport	7	Manufacturing	8	Security	9
Civil Service	6	Gas, Electricity & Water	6	Telecommunications & IT	8	NHS	8
Manufacturing	6	NHS	6	Charities & Voluntary Sector	7	Transport	8
Aviation	5	Security	6	Aviation	6	Oil & Gas	7
Gas, Electricity & Water	5	Charities & Voluntary Sector	5	NHS	6	Social Care	6
Retail	5	Civil Service	5	Catering & Hospitality	5	Aviation	5
Construction	4	Defence	5	Construction	5	Local Government	5
Consultancy	4	Construction	4	Retail	5	Manufacturing	5
Facilities Management	4	Manufacturing	3	Civil Service	4	Railways	5
Financial Services	4	Reserves	3	Gas, Electricity & Water	4	Charities & Voluntary Sector	4

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