



YOU'RE IN YOUR OWN TIME NOW: UNDERSTANDING CURRENT EXPERIENCES OF TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN LIFE IN SCOTLAND

INTERIM REPORT

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

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Glossary of Terms

Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP)	ASAP provides dedicated information, advice, and support to members of the Armed Forces Community in Scotland.
Army Families Federation (AFF)	The AFF is the independent voice of Army families: Regular or Reserve, wherever they are based, whatever the make-up of their family. Throughout the UK and overseas, AFF offer advice and guidance on all aspects of Army life. AFF also work with other agencies such as MoD, government, charities, and other key players to strengthen our cause and fight for a fair deal for families everywhere.
Career Transition Partnership (CTP)	The CTP is a strategic partnership between the MoD and Right Management Limited to deliver the MOD funded resettlement programme to entitled personnel leaving the Armed Forces.
Early Service Leavers (ESL)	ESL are those who leave before serving four years in one of the Services.
Edinburgh Napier University (ENU)	Edinburgh Napier University is a public university in Edinburgh, Scotland. Napier Technical College, the predecessor of the university, was founded in 1964, taking its name from 16th-century Scottish mathematician and philosopher John Napier.
Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT)	Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) is a London-based spend-out trust, endowed by the National Lottery Community Fund. Its mission is to provide an evidence base that will influence and underpin policy making and service delivery to enable ex-Service personnel and their families to lead successful civilian lives.
Ministry of Defence (MoD)	The Ministry of Defence is the British government department responsible for implementing the defence policy set by Her Majesty's Government and is the headquarters of the British Armed Forces.
Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee (MoDREC)	Ensures all research involving human participants either undertaken, funded or sponsored by the MoD meets nationally and internationally accepted ethical standards.
National Health Service Scotland (NHS Scotland)	NHS Scotland is the publicly funded healthcare system in Scotland, and one of the four systems which make up the National Health Service in the United Kingdom. It operates fourteen territorial NHS boards across Scotland, seven

	special non-geographic health boards and NHS Health Scotland.
Naval Families Federation (NFF)	The NFF exists to give all currently serving Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel and their families the opportunity to have their views heard by those in positions of power. NFF work to remove disadvantage that may result from Service life.
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	PTSD is a mental health condition caused by a traumatic experience.
Royal Air Force Families Federation (RAF FF)	The RAF FF work to improve quality of life for the RAF family around the world – at work or at home. This could include resolving problems with access to education or healthcare, for children and young people; sorting out problems with accommodation, benefits, and visas; helping military spouses find meaningful employment.
Scottish Veterans Commissioner (SVC)	The SVC works to improve the lives and opportunities of the veterans community in Scotland. This is done by engaging with members of the ex-Service community. They also engage with the public, private and voluntary organisations that represent them.
Skills Development Scotland (SDS)	Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is Scotland's national skills body. They contribute to Scotland's sustainable economic growth by supporting people and businesses to develop and apply their skills.
Training, Education, Skills, Recruiting and Resettlement (TESRR)	TESRR is a Directorate of the Ministry of Defence and is responsible, amongst other things, for tri-Service resettlement policy and for the delivery of resettlement services through the partnering agreement with Right Management (delivered via the Career Transition Partnership – CTP).

1 Introduction

This study is a collaboration between the University of Edinburgh (UoE) and Edinburgh Napier University (ENU). UoE are responsible for the overall budget and timescale for the study, while ENU are responsible for all aspects of research and delivery of outcomes. The aim of the study is to significantly improve the understanding of transition to civilian life across Scotland. This report presents the interim findings of an ongoing project funded by FiMT called *You're in Your Own Time Now: Understanding Current Experiences of Transition to Civilian Life in Scotland*. This two-year project (2020-2022) represents substantive mixed methods research to explore military

to civilian transition to inform future policy and practice by providing policy makers and service providers with original evidence to address issues of health, housing, employment, finance, and skills. The study will be conducted in four phases and include data collection with key stakeholders, service leavers/veterans and their spouse/partner, serving personnel, and workshops.

There have been many studies into Transition, (Lord Ashcroft's 2014 Veteran's Transition Review¹, FiMT's Transition Mapping Studies in 2013² and 2017³, the Deloitte Veterans Work studies in 2016⁴, and 2019⁵, FiMT's Improving Transition out of the Armed Forces in 2018⁶ and The Families' Federations' Lifting the Lid on Transition in Nov 2018⁷) these

¹ Ashcroft, K.C.M.G.P.C., 2014. The veterans' transition review. Accessed April 14, 2021. <http://www.veteranstransition.co.uk/vtrreport.pdf>

² Forces in Mind Trust. (2013). The transition mapping study: Understanding the transition process for service personnel returning to civilian life. Accessed April 20, 2021. www.fim-trust.org/images/PDFs/FiMT_report_FINAL.pdf

³ Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT), 2017. Continue to work: The transition mapping study. London, UK: Forces in Mind Trust. Retrieved from: <https://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/the-transition-mapping-study-2017-continue-to-work.pdf>

⁴ Deloitte LLP. (2016). Veterans work - Recognising the potential of ex-service personnel. Forces In Mind Trust: <https://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/veterans-work-recognising-potential-ex-service-personnel.pdf> Accessed March 15 2021.

⁵ Heal, J., Crouch, L., Halkiopoulos, S., Fussey, V. and Kirkman, E., 2019. Applying behavioural insights to successful transition. Forces in Mind Trust: London, UK.

⁶ Halkiopoulos, S., Makinson, L. and Heal, J., 2018. Improving transition out of the Armed Forces: engaging families through behavioural insights.

⁷ Heaven, L., McCullough, K. and Briggs, L., 2018. Lifting the Lid on Transition: The families'

reports are pan-UK, and although they address multiple aspects of transition, such as preparation, skills and behaviours, few have focused specifically on geographical regions. Consequently, there remains limited research focusing specifically on the experiences of military to civilian transition in Scotland. This study aims to address that gap.

1.1 Structure of the Report

This report is structured as follows:

- ❖ **Chapter 2** briefly outlines the background and context for the research.
- ❖ **Chapter 3** outlines the research framework in relation to the mixed qualitative and

quantitative methodologies and discusses the research design.

- ❖ **Chapter 4** provides an overview of the literature on what is known in relation to military to civilian transition in Scotland.
- ❖ **Chapter 5** discusses the early quantitative findings as well as the early findings from key stakeholders to capture the most significant changes to transition in Scotland.
- ❖ **Chapter 6** presents our conclusion and outlines our approach for Phase 2 and 3 of the study.

1.2 Project Outcomes and Tracking Progress

	Activities	Progress	Notes
Year 1	A substantive Literature Review to assess evidence in relation to Scotland and assist development of the research context.	Complete but will be updated throughout the study	Systematic review of military transition has been conducted. Apart from the five key themes (Education, Housing, Employment, Health and Finance) from the Covenant, other themes emerging from the literature are being considered. Also reviewed are the differences in UK and Scottish literature about transitions in the Armed Forces. This also includes a review of the international literature for comparison purposes where appropriate.
	Acquire ENU ethical approval	Complete	
	Develop Data Management Plan	Complete	
	Online survey 1 and 2 were created to replace the large data set on service leavers which as yet is not available from CTP. This was to understand a range of key demographic factors for service leavers/veterans settling in Scotland, such as their distribution across local authorities. The outcomes are helping us to form the agenda for further exploration in qualitative interviews in Year 2.	Phase 1 Complete	The survey is still active, and more than 140 responses have been received to date from veterans resident in Scotland. Feedback from the advisory board prompted us to seek a more diverse sample with greater responses from females, injured veterans, ethnic minorities, and LGBT veterans. For this reason, the survey remains open.
	Collection of primary data through engagement with key stakeholders.	Complete	14 interviews have been completed. Additional contacts have been acquired and interviews and data analysis are ongoing. Additional interviews were added in response to the Advisory Board feedback.
Year 2	Engagement with active personnel, service leavers and their families through questionnaires, interviews, and workshops.	In progress	Once MODREC approval is granted (provisional approval granted, awaiting final approval) the survey will be circulated across the Tri services in Scotland to those considering transition in the next two years or those in the process of transition. We are using our connections on the advisory board and at Cranfield as gatekeepers. The outcomes of the surveys will help to form the agenda for the subsequent interviews with a purposive sample from these groups.
	Comparative analysis of expected outcomes (organisational beneficiaries, service providers) with lived experiences of service leavers.	In progress	Interview transcripts have been processed and the associated data is being analysed. Interim findings are being presented in this report.
	Dissemination of findings through conference presentations, published articles, engagement with public, and stakeholders including employers, CTP, SVC, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish and UK Governments etc; production of final report.	In progress	Currently, we plan to conduct three appreciative inquiry workshops with respondents. This will involve reporting back on key findings and using workshops to identify claims, concerns, and issues, prioritise needs and plan for the way forward. At least two publications are planned for peer reviewed journals and in negotiation with our media students the development of several short films to circulate through social media on the outcomes of the study.

2 Background and Context of the Study

2.1 Current Landscape

The 2019 report from the Scottish Veterans Commissioner (Positive Futures, 2019) noted that the transition process is one of the key areas which still provides significant challenge for service leavers. This project addresses the lack of current, in-depth analysis of data relating specifically to service leavers in Scotland, both in terms of demographics and lived experience. The overall aim of our project is to provide an evidence base that will influence and underpin policy making and service delivery, to enable ex-service personnel and their families to lead successful civilian lives.

The outcomes of this project will inform policy makers and service providers about the demographics and experiences of service leavers across Scotland, generating useful insights for both UK and Scottish Governments and the third sector. Better data capture and analysis will enable potential improvements to be offered, which will more accurately reflect the changing landscape of needs and resources.

It is widely acknowledged that significant improvements could be made to the availability and use of data regarding veterans in Scotland⁸. The total size of full-time UK Armed Forces (trained and untrained) as of 1st July 2021 was just under 159,000⁹. In 2016 across the UK, it was estimated that there were approximately 2.5 million UK Armed Forces veterans residing in Great Britain. This is forecast to decrease year-on-year to 1.6 million by 2028¹⁰. In Scotland in 2019 there were an estimated 240,000 UK Armed Forces veterans, with an estimated additional 1,800 ex-service personnel and their families planning

⁸The Scottish Government, 2020. The Strategy for our Veterans - Taking the Strategy Forward in Scotland. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2020/01/strategy-veterans-taking-strategy-forward-scotland/documents/strategy-veterans-taking-strategy-forward-scotland/strategy-veterans-taking-strategy-forward-scotland/govscot%3Adocument/strategy-veterans-taking-strategy-forward-scotland.pdf>

⁹ Harding, M. and Dempsey, N., UK Defence Personnel Statistics, 2021. *Houses of Common Library, UK Parliament*. Retrieved from: [CBP-7930.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons/lib/otherpublications/cbp7930.pdf)

¹⁰ MoD, 2019. Population Projections: UK Armed Forces Veterans residing in Great Britain, 2016 to 2028. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/population-projections-uk-armed-forces-veterans-residing-in-great-britain-2016-to-2028>

to settle in Scotland annually¹¹. Moreover, it was estimated that more than half (129,000; 58%) of the veterans residing in Scotland were aged 65 and over. However, the balance is likely to change significantly in the coming decade, resulting in a younger age profile in the veterans community and potentially different needs.

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

2.2 Understanding the Nature of a "Scottish" Unit or Base

The staffing complement of a base or unit will not be uniquely Scottish, with personnel from the rest of the United Kingdom, or elsewhere, serving in these locations. Even units identifiably Scottish, such as the Royal Regiment of Scotland, include personnel from the Commonwealth and the rest of the UK. Equally, there are Scots serving in Scottish units which are based outside Scotland, or in the RAF, Royal Navy, Royal Marines Army units which have no obvious Scottish association, such as the Royal Logistics Corps or the Parachute Regiment. Any armed forces' base, or unit, will therefore have families with a range of experiences and backgrounds.

It would also be wrong to view the main base areas as the sole sources of armed forces personnel. Most obviously, across Scotland there are several reserve units of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army and RAF. These tend to be categorised as 'minor units', i.e., company or squadron strength, or equivalent; typically, around 100 reserve personnel. To each are attached a small staff of regular officers, warrant officers or NCOs: leaders, instructors, or administrative staff to support the complement of reservists. Meanwhile, the Reserves are seen as central to the UK's defence commitment, and reservists themselves are integrated into regular forces' training and deployments. Since their prime employment is generally

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

civilian, this important group, found throughout Scotland, is often overlooked. Although reservists are not entitled to Service Family Accommodation, and their families are therefore not integrated into Service life in the same way that a regular Service Person's family tends to be (a reservist's family is not posted from one country to another, for example), the needs of reservist families will be similar to regulars at times. This is particularly evident when reservists are mobilised for long periods of uniformed service, for example a 6-month overseas deployment, with all the attendant challenges, risks, uncertainty, and family separation faced by their regular counterparts. This existence outside the Service community is being increasingly recognised by some local authorities such as Highland Council, who have incorporated the needs of veterans and their families into their annual strategy.

Similarly, the Armed Forces Covenant creates expectations for veterans (those who have previous military service). Veterans may settle around the last military base where they served, or they may return to the area where they were brought up. Equally, they may settle in an area of choice unrelated to their previous lives. This is a population that is arguably more mobile than many parts of the population. The distribution of veterans across Scotland is therefore a response to several factors. As with reservists, they may not be obviously visible in any given community, and like reservists may not wish to declare their status.

Although the RAF and Navy tend to work more from their Scottish bases, and the Army sends personnel away on a more frequent basis, all three Services post people in out of Scotland as well as sending them to conduct training, or deploy on operations overseas, on a regular basis. There is therefore a continual rotation of personnel and families. In summary, there is an issue about accurate and comprehensive identification of both the whole armed forces population and its component parts in Scotland which we hope will be enlightened from the outcomes of this study.

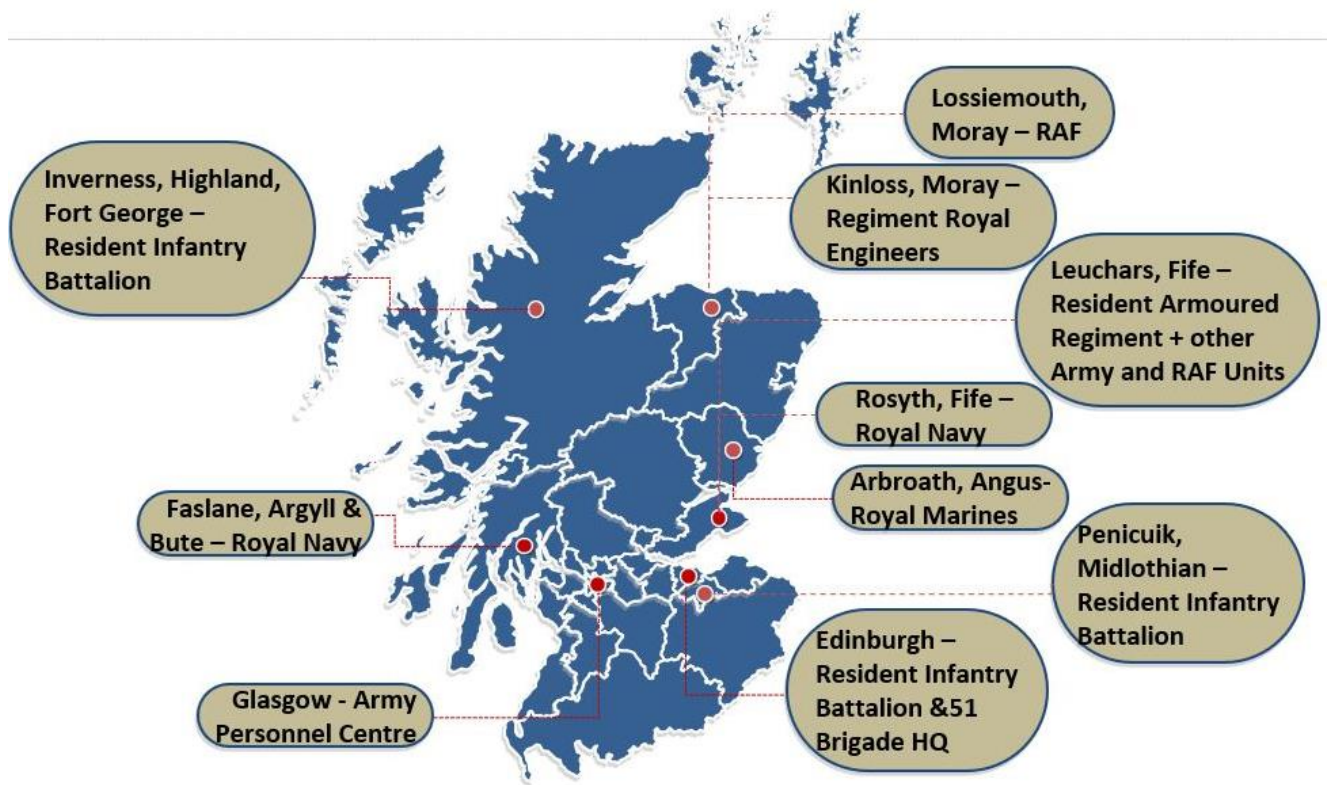


Figure 1: Present Distribution of Main Military Bases in Scotland (2021)

The principal locations for the regular forces in Scotland are:

- Arbroath, Angus, Royal Marines
- Edinburgh, Resident infantry battalion and Headquarters 51 Brigade.
- Faslane, Argyll and Bute, Royal Navy and Royal Marines
- Glasgow, Army Personnel Centre
- Inverness, Highland, Fort George, Resident Infantry Battalion
- Kinloss, Moray, Regiment Royal Engineers
- Leuchars, Fife, Resident armoured regiment, plus other Army and RAF units
- Lossiemouth, Moray, RAF
- Penicuik, Midlothian, Resident Infantry battalion
- Rosyth, Fife, Royal Navy

2.3 Future Changes

The strength and disposition of the Armed Forces is subject to periodic review by the UK Government and indeed, the latest restructuring of the Army has just been announced, with some significant changes for Scotland.¹² Typically, such reviews result in changes to:

- Overall staffing strength (numbers of personnel)
- Military infrastructure (bases) that may be closed, reduced, enhanced, or experience a change in role
- The balance between regular and reserve forces
- The balance between uniformed and civilianised (outsourced) services
- Technological emphasis, for example developments in machine learning, AI or the new priority given to cyber warfare
- Roles and mission, with, for example increased use of military personnel in supporting UK or regional resilience challenges, often manifested in formal requests for Military Assistance to the Civil Authorities (MACA).

Taken together, these changes mean that the numbers, nature of the work and how the work of armed forces personnel is organised, even in a long-established base area, may change significantly in the future. For the reasons outlined above each change will carry implications for both armed forces personnel and their families.

2.4 Resettlement and Transition Policy Developments

The MoD provides guidance to Service Personnel on important matters (legal issues, Health & Safety, personnel management, welfare, education etc) through Joint Service Publications (JSPs). The JSP for resettlement, JSP 534¹³, explains that Service Leavers (SL) fall into one of the following mutually exclusive categories and definitions:

- a. Normal Discharge SL. Normal discharge SL are those discharged either on completion of their engagement, having submitted their notice to leave, having been given notice of discharge (either redundancy or compulsory).

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-soldier-transforming-the-british-army>

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tri-service-resettlement-manual-jsp-534>

b. Medical Discharge SL. All SL regardless of length of service who are being discharged for medical reasons.

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

The current resettlement contract was awarded and implemented under the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) with effect from 1 Oct 2015, and offers support for all Regular Service Personnel, regardless of time served or reason for leaving. Different programmes are offered depending upon time served and other factors:

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

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

The most important change to MoD policy for Service Leavers in recent years is the introduction of JSP 100, the Holistic Transition Policy (MoD, 2019¹⁴). It is significant because it for the first time it brings together under a single policy guidance on employment, health and wellbeing, welfare, housing advice, financial information, and advice to the chain of command on how leaders should support service personnel and their families through career and at end of Service. It is too early at this stage to say how well it is being implemented, but the fact that the MoD is acknowledging that there is a need to improve the current level of support for service leavers, and improving its guidance and service, is noted.

2.5 Key Stakeholders and Support Mechanisms

Scotland is unique in many of the support systems that are in place for armed forces personnel, veterans, and their families. Understanding the role of key stakeholders such as the Scottish Veterans Commissioner (the first such appointment within the UK), Veterans Scotland, various organisations within the Third Sector, NHS Scotland, and the various councils is key to explaining the current landscape in Scotland. The concept of partnership working across these groups is also unique and worthy of investigation within this study. Moreover, the support of various armed forces family federations, and other bodies, e.g., Skills Development Scotland, also plays a major role in how transition is operationalised in Scotland.

From an Armed Forces perspective, key bodies involved in the transition process include Training Education Skills Recruitment and Resettlement (TESRR), which is a MoD department, and the Career Transition Partnership (CTP), which is the strategic partnership between the MOD and Right Management Limited to provide the MOD funded resettlement programme for service leavers. While the majority of the civilian key stakeholder interviews for this report have been completed, engaging with those within the Armed Forces requires MoDREC approval. As the literature suggests that not all people leaving the forces use CTP, we have identified the need to conduct interviews with both those who have used CTP's services and those who have elected not to, to understand more about the process and challenges of transition.

¹⁴ [JSP100 Parts1And2 V1.1 Apr 21 .pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

2.6 New Military Developments in Scotland

We are aware that there are significant changes planned for the way in which the Army in Scotland will develop.

“The Secretary of State has just announced how the Army in Scotland will change. Under Future Soldier Scotland will gain a major unit and will also see a higher portion of the British Army based in Scotland. This provides an opportunity for more Scottish Soldiers to be based nearer home whilst delivering a broad range of exciting roles.

The 2nd and 3rd Battalion of the Royal Regiment of Scotland (Major General Bill Wright, Scotland’s Senior General Officer) will continue to be based in Scotland with two Scots staying in Edinburgh and three Scots staying in Inverness until 2029 before moving to Leuchars - forming an integral part of a new Security Force Assistance Brigade. The Scots Dragoon Guards will remain as a Light Cavalry Regiment based out of Leuchars. Glencorse Barracks has been saved from closure, and an additional sub-unit will be based at Kinloss. Redford Barracks closure has been delayed by four years to 2029, with plans to close Fort George, Inverness continuing as planned.

Future Soldier will see £355 million of investment in the Army estate in Scotland, delivering over £1 billion of prosperity benefit. The Army’s footprint in Scotland will be reinforced by a significant proportion of the £3.35 billion from the Defence Estate Optimisation budget and £1.2 billion of Army investment in remaining sites.

Reserve Forces across the UK will be given increased responsibility. This includes the 6th and 7th Battalions of the Royal Regiment of Scotland and the Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry who, in 2023, will form part of the new 19th Brigade, responsible for generating forces for home-based resilience tasks, especially in times of crises. The Scottish Gunners, (19 Regiment, Royal Artillery) will form a critical part of a new Deep Recce Strike Brigade Combat Team. Based on Salisbury Plain, the Brigade Combat Team will provide the British Army with an extremely long-range surveillance capability and precision fires.”

Major General Bill Wright, Scotland’s Senior General Officer. Nov. 2021.

The picture for the armed forces in Scotland is therefore varied and one of continual change into the foreseeable future. The key developments above will also be considered in future data capture.

Year 1 of this study set out to explore the Scottish landscape in terms of what is available to Service Leavers settling in Scotland, and what transition should look like from the perspective of key stakeholders. This was to provide a baseline by which the experience of veterans and serving personnel may be explored and

compared. As the large data set was not available, we introduced two surveys to collect demographic information across several areas relevant to the study. In this report we provide interim findings on one of the surveys and the interviews with key stakeholders. Year 2, discussed later in the report, will explore the experience of transition from the perspective of serving personnel (including those thinking about transition as well as those in transition), and veterans and families based in Scotland.

3 Methodology

3.1 Aim

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

3.2 Objectives

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

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

3.3 Advisory Board

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

3.4 Design Approach

The overall design of this study is informed by the overarching approach of appreciative enquiry and utilises systematic review and realist evaluation methods. This means that the study is grounded in the reality of the world in which transition exists, and we seek to understand why and how something works well whilst simultaneously appreciating and understanding context. Appreciative inquiry is particularly relevant to this study due to its history in evidence-based design, where the direct focus is on the needs and experiences of service users and utilises this as a basis for development. This approach will support the study by appreciating; valuing the best of what is; envisioning what might be; engaging in dialogue about what should be and innovating what will be.

We have adopted a mixed methods approach to data collection. Capturing both quantitative and qualitative data capture recognises the need for a consistent *quantitative* data collation matrix alongside a variety of *qualitative* interview methods.

3.5 Literature Review

The study is underpinned by a review of what is known about military to civilian transition in the UK, and what can be learned about resettlement/transition in other countries where the evidence suggests similar contexts and experiences to those of our own veterans in Scotland. We have adopted a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) (Bruce & Mollison, 2004) to provide a theoretical underpinning, to assist in the development of a conceptual framework, and to identify important themes. This means we are seeking to produce information that can be defended and supported in wider debate.

This approach in previous studies has been particularly helpful to inform healthcare policy decisions and practice-based recommendations – because the conclusions are firmly based on available evidence. This review is similarly orientated by mapping what evidence is extant. We focus on a wide range of issues, but we have paid special attention to those surrounding areas of specific concern such as health and wellbeing, housing, employment, finance, and skills and education. The systematic evidence-based review is used to inform interview and focus group questions.

We gave precedence to empirical academic research to provide a robust theoretical underpinning. Academic research by its very nature is designed to be objective and therefore can be replicated in other contexts.

3.5.1 Search Strategy

A selection of terms was used to try to capture all relevant studies on military to civilian transition (see Figure 4). To develop a comprehensive search strategy, the research team enlisted the expertise of ENU’s subject librarian, who conducted the search on various platforms.

Search Parameters	
Napier Primo Searches 1	
1.	Armed Forces Covenant AND Families
2.	Armed Forces Covenant AND Education
3.	Armed Forces Covenant AND Employment
4.	Armed Forces Covenant AND Health
5.	General
Web of Science Searches 2	
1.	Transition AND Army AND UK
2.	Transition AND "Armed Forces" AND UK
3.	Transition AND "Air Force" AND UK
4.	Transition AND Navy AND UK
5.	Transition AND Army
6.	Transition and Army (pt 2)
7.	Transition AND Army (pt3)
8.	Transition AND "Armed Forces"
9.	Transition AND Navy
10.	Transition AND "Air Force"
11.	Transition AND Navy AND UK
12.	Transition AND "Air Force" AND UK

Figure 2: Search Terms

3.5.2 Selection Criteria

Articles were included if they met the following criteria:

- Peer-reviewed¹⁵
- Used quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methodology
- Investigated, analysed, or explored military to civilian transition

Articles were excluded if they focused exclusively on:

- Participants who were child soldiers or non-Armed Forces population (e.g., veteran teachers, Gulf veterans).
- Exclusively focused on interventions for PTSD, learning difficulties, disabilities etc., or those only looking at psychometric properties

Citations and abstracts were downloaded, and duplicates were manually removed. Based on the above criteria, the remaining duplicates were sifted out during title screening. Based on the above criteria, titles were screened for an initial decision on inclusion. The remaining article abstracts were read to assess their applicability, excluding only those that did not meet the selection criteria. Where possible, the full text of the remaining articles was obtained and read in their entirety to make a final decision as to inclusion for data extraction.

3.6 Realist Evaluation

3.6.1 Contextualising the Landscape

Our scoping study and literature review have allowed us to frame the concepts – both academic and operational – surrounding the transition landscape in Scotland. This is a complex environment, and the challenges of evaluating these are well-documented; transition into civilian life occurs in a variety of contexts and involves different stakeholders (e.g., NHS, SDS, Tri-services Families Federations, TESRR

¹⁵ The database search also included targeted grey literature searches to ensure that policy, programming, and other non-academic perspectives could also be captured in the analysis. Grey literature is defined as literature that is not published in peer-reviewed academic journals, and includes policy papers, research reports, government white papers, doctoral theses, workshop transcripts, evaluation reports, and other forms of substantive work. Although grey literature is generally considered to be less reliable than peer-reviewed academic journal articles, it nonetheless often includes informative and rigorous publications that complement and build on the available academic literature.

etc.). We know that just as there is no common definition of 'transition', there is no typical experience of it among service leavers.

The factors that influence these experiences are similarly complex and dynamic, although many of the factors themselves appear to be common across different settings. Figure 5 below illustrates our literature-based methodological framework.

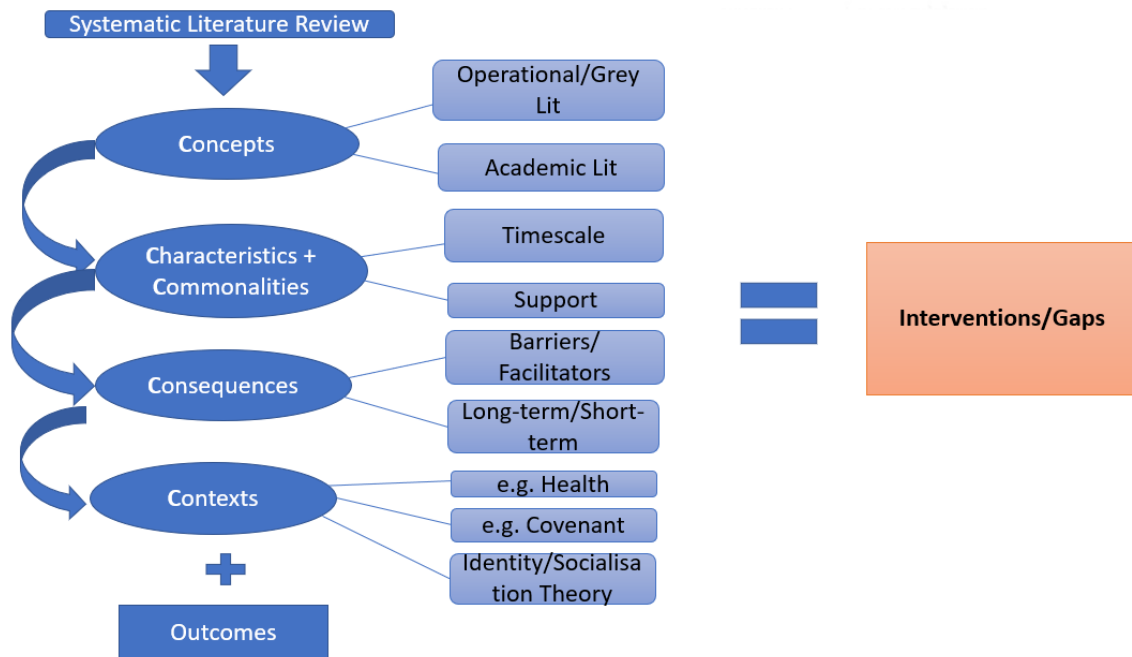


Figure 3: Literature Based Methodological Framework

So far, we have framed our concepts, and we have identified that these are expressed variously according to context, even if we do not yet fully understand how. We also know from the literature that there are commonalities across the transition landscape which influence service leavers' experiences, and that the characteristics of such experiences (such as timescale, type and frequency of support etc.) can be both barriers and facilitators to achieving the desired outcome. What works in one context, in theory, may not work in another. By focussing only on the literature, however, we risk missing out on potentially valuable information which could allow us to understand the situation more fully. These 'interventions' themselves do not produce outcomes; rather, it is the *mechanisms* by which they work.

Consequently, it is important to understand what works, for whom, and under what circumstances. This is the basis of realist evaluation, which affords us an explanatory focus and the ability to include a wide range of evidence sources, developing theories that consider the context-mechanism-outcome approach – that is, how these contexts mobilise resources through which interventions work or do not work and their ability to promote successful transition experiences.

It is worth noting here that the context-mechanism-outcome approach is not necessarily a linear one, even though it is ultimately expressed as such; for example, interventions may work in more than one way in a particular context, or a theory may be based on an existing outcome. Although realist evaluations are not able to address every eventuality, they can illuminate complex situations and provide contextual explanations, which are arguably more useful here.

3.6.2 Data Collection

Figure 6 below illustrates how various data collection techniques allow us to capture the transition interventions that work or do not work.

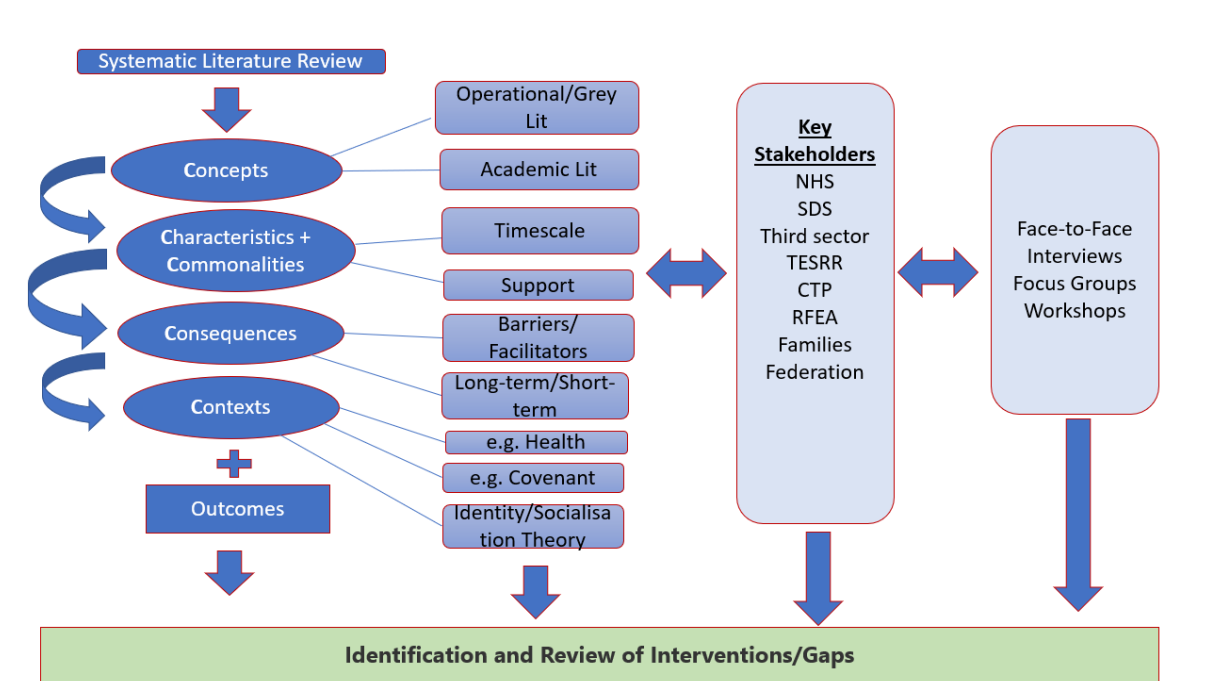


Figure 4: Data Collection Techniques

To enhance our demographic mapping, we are in the process of conducting two online surveys. The first encompassing serving personnel (subject to MODREC

final approval), veterans and their families (complete) and the second in partnership with Sue Bomphray (co-chair of the Veterans Employability Strategic Group) to investigate the employment trends and desired skills of veterans in Scottish companies with recognised Gold Covenant status.

In tandem we have conducted comprehensive engagement with organisations that provide support to service leavers and veterans in Scotland through 14 in-depth interviews with key stakeholders to help us to establish what the experience of military transition in Scotland should be. The interviews were recorded with permission from the participants, and transcribed verbatim. The interviews were analysed thematically, and each participant was given an identifying code. Key stakeholder quotes have been identified in Chapter 5 as beginning with 'KI'.

We will use these first stage data as a baseline comparison for the data collected from Veterans and active personnel on their actual experience of transition.

This chapter has outlined our methodology. The following chapter considers the literature on transition from military to civilian life.

4 Literature Review

The Covenant, both as a term and a concept only came into existence during times of operational stress in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Until then, the Covenant only existed as a concept of the Army doctrine. Likewise, the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force did not use the term “military covenant” and there was no such formal acknowledgment or obligation, while the Ministry of Defence (MoD) merely expressed that they “share the same understanding” (Ingham, 2013:9-10, 294). The covenant was quite limited initially and remained a formal document – Army Doctrine Publication 5 (McGarry et al., 2012) as the legal basis for it and the formal establishment of the Tri-service underpinnings did not begin until 2011. Hence, while the thinking began in 2000 through the publication of ‘Soldering: The Military Covenant’ (MoD, 2000) by the British Army, which highlighted the obligations and personal sacrifices expected of soldiers in the service of the nation but also stated the need for the armed forces to be sustained by the nation. Ten years of discussion and political debate followed before becoming law (MoD, 2011). The Scottish Government subsequently published a complementary strategy in 2012 called “Our Commitments”, and this was later updated in 2016 “Renewing Our Commitments”. Both documents set out the Scottish Governments priorities and pledge to ensure that the armed forces and veterans' community is properly supported, and their contributions recognised, including a commitment to priority NHS treatment.

It is within this context and the MoD’s publication of the Strategy for Veterans (MoD, 2006) that the government, military charities, academic community, and the public developed an interest in understanding the transition process from military to civilian life. Furthermore, with the Armed Forces Covenant becoming enshrined in law in January 2021 now creates a legal duty for relevant UK public bodies to uphold the principles of the Covenant, to ensure the UK Armed Forces community is treated fairly. *‘Transition is the term commonly used to describe the period of change around reintegration into civilian life from the Armed Forces’*. (Scottish Veterans Commissioner, 2019:10). In the UK, the Veterans Agency is part of the MoD, and its remit is to help *‘ex-service personnel get appropriate support from the government, local authorities, independent bodies, and the charity sector’* (Veterans UK, 2017).

Researchers have suggested that the MoD has broken its 'psychological contract' with its people in terms of offering a career for life (officer or other rank)¹⁶. Previously, an 'officer' could reasonably expect to serve until aged 55 and an 'other rank' for 22 years from recruitment /training¹⁷. Restoring the faith and trust of veterans and their families through the Covenant, and helping them to access support, remains a challenge and is therefore an important and integral part of any proposed initiative (Dover and Gearson, 2017). Furthermore, the knowledge and understanding of the Covenant amongst providers is variable and translating policy from government ministries into operationalisation at ground level simply adds to the complexity. Particularly when this involves negotiating complicated layers of devolution within already complex organisations, such as local government, colleges, universities, and the NHS. Wider general community awareness and appreciation of veterans, such as that exists in the US, where for example serving military take priority when boarding domestic flights, is not as prevalent in the UK (Hines et al., 2015).

Although certain individuals can continue in service until the age of 60, many personnel will retire or move into civilian life at an earlier point. Additionally, Service Personnel do not invariably require immediate support at the time of transitioning out of the armed forces. Some do, but for many the need is not immediate or is not immediately recognised. Problems may often occur years after leaving and, although many find temporary solutions (employment, housing, re-skilling, education, medical treatment), it may not be until much later that physical or mental health problems arise, leading to more complicated issues around education, employment, and families. For the country, and the MoD, managing this transition is important as it represents either a resource that can continue to give value or a burden that can incur both personal and societal costs.

¹⁶ As a profession, the Armed Forces had changed its stance on having a career in the military for life. Many services personnel would need to prepare for a mid-career change in terms of job and lifestyle.

¹⁷ 'Other Ranks' could be extended beyond 22 years on an annual basis if it was in the interest of the military and by exception high calibre non-commissioned officers could apply or be recommended for a commission which would extend their military service to aged 55 years.

4.1 Military to Civilian Transition: Theories and Frameworks

It is evident from the above section that the historic application of the covenant was weak, and while the contemporary one has a firmer footing, the nature of actual support that is available and provided to service leavers/veterans remains contested.

Many reasons exist for individuals leaving the forces including voluntary discharge before the end of the agreed term or redundancy programmes. A few other reasons include reaching the end of the contracted period, involuntary discharge (disciplinary, medical discharge, being deemed unsuitable), before completing basic training, and for unspecified reasons. (MoD, 2019a). Moreover, some individuals may have served their whole adult/working life in the forces and have had no adult experience of the civilian world, whilst others may have served for a much shorter time; both categories of service leavers transitioning to civilian life vary to a considerable extent. The complexities of transitioning from military to civilian life are well documented in the academic literature, through a range of concepts such as practical challenges (uncertainty about the future) (Walker, 2013), emotional challenges (loss of status), financial difficulties and readjusting to and/or lack of family (Bergman, Burdett, and Greenberg, 2014; Wolpert, 2000), as well as seeking employment and housing (Fulton et al., 2019). Thereby creating changes in relationships, expectations, work contexts, and personal and social identity. However, the literature also identifies problems with leaving the forces that relate to mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, PTSD, alcohol and drug misuse, delayed-onset PTSD, suicide, self-harm, etc. (Stevellink et al., 2019; Walker, 2013).

The definition of transition varies based on the academic background from which it originates, with a consensus suggesting restructuring or adaptation to a new situation or circumstance (see Kralik et al., 2006; Kirchner and Minnis, 2018; Truusa and Castro, 2019; Fossey et al., 2019). Many theories have attempted to capture the process of transition from military to civilian environments, however there is no widely accepted definition. Most theories try to focus on definition that “experiences that introduce change into people’s lives and impact people’s societal roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions” (Greer, 2017 p. 56). Several attempts have been made to comprehensively describe military to civilian transition including Schlossberg (1981), where transition theory is described, “as

people move through life, they continually experience change and transition, and that these changes often result in new networks of relationships, new behaviours, and new self-perceptions” (p. 2). This theory offers a framework that is structured around four areas – situation, self, support, and strategies, all of which are dependent upon the effectiveness of coping with transitions. This theory was enhanced in 1995 by Chickering and Schlossberg through the development of a conceptual framework of the transitional model which described transition as a process of moving in, moving through, and moving out.

Other models applied to the research on veteran transition include that developed by Meleis (2010), who suggested that transitions are a *“passage from one fairly stable state to another fairly stable state, and it is a process triggered by a change”* (p. 11), although definitions of stability, in this case, are ambiguous. An alternative to stability would be a developmental transition, as suggested by Levinson (1986), whereby a transitional period signifies the end of one stage and the beginning of another (Meleis, 2010). Jolly (1996) described a framework based on three stages in the process of change: confrontation (the individual acknowledges and confronts the change that was possibly forced on them), disengagement (typically muddled where the individual can be reflective until they are ready to progress in a new direction), and resocialisation (the process of adopting a new identity). Kubler-Ross (1969) five stages cycle of grief has also been used to explore transition by representing five stages of feelings people experience when dealing with change in their own lives. The model postulates that individuals move between the five stages (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance) and not in a linear manner. Additionally, the stages can last for varying amounts of time or individuals can even become stuck in certain phases, finding it difficult or impossible to move on. Like all transitions, there is the potential to move, and loss and bereavement transitions are no different.

Hollingshead (1946) described a conceptual framework derived from working with WWII veterans that involved three phases of life: pre-military (civilian life before service with preconceived notions of war and the military), military (conditioning, training for war, development of military identity that sets them apart from civilian peers), and post-military (loss of military support except for veteran benefits and fending for oneself in civilian settings). Faulkner and McGaw (1977) developed a conceptual framework with three phases through their work with Vietnam War

Veterans: moving from war (disassociating from friendships and bonds created in military life), moving back to civilian life (managing homecoming expectations), and moving toward consolidating social involvement (taking responsibility for fitting in).

Yet another recent military to civilian transition framework is the Bourdieusian theory by Cooper et al., (2017), where transition involves navigating through the complex civilian world and acquiring cultural competence. Their framework can be used to visually model individual trajectories across the life course from pre-service, during service, and post-service using the concepts of habitus (subconscious dispositions acquired in developing an identity), capital (rank, military experiences, ability to manage in military social groups, and other social, cultural, economic, and symbolic resources), and space (field, e.g., military, or civilian life). While military habitus and capital are essential for the military space it is not always suitable in the civilian space. Whilst there are different theories of transitions that can be applied to veterans' experiences, what is evident is the commonality to increase the focus on planning and practical applications to meet veterans' needs in a constantly changing context.

As is evident from the above, there is no widely accepted theory or framework in the literature that defines transition within a military context. The most cited definition within military transition in the UK is that by FiMT (2013), which provides an operational life-course conceptual framework:

"A good transition is one that enables ex-Service personnel to be sufficiently resilient to adapt successfully to civilian life, both now and in the future. This resilience includes financial, psychological, and emotional resilience, and encompasses the ex-service person and their immediate families." (FiMT, 2013, p. 5).

The prevailing feature of these frameworks is the emphasis on the individual process that takes place over a period of time from some point in service to some point after discharge. There are also a variety of interacting determinants that variously affect well-being across the life course in all areas of life. All factors are important determinants for successful military to civilian transition outcomes including preparedness through life skills, employment, financial support,

managing identity disruption, social and family support, housing, education, and access to health care. Some of these concepts are explored in greater depth below.

4.1.1 Employment and Finance

Successfully gaining and retaining employment is one of the cornerstones of a successful transition. Indeed, as emphasised in the Armed Forces Covenant (MoD, 2011:8) *'involves an obligation for life ... [that] the commitment and sacrifices made by veterans in the past, as well as their continuing value to society, should be properly recognised in the support they receive'*. It can be perceived from this statement that service leavers are being considered as an *'extraordinary resource'* (Ashcroft, 2014: 9). Furthermore, those who suffered injury would be enabled a *'smooth transition to an appropriately skilled civilian life'* (MoD, 2012). This could be argued to mean that the veteran has housing and employment, does not require special medical attention, and is independent (not dependent on welfare). As emphasised by Ashcroft (2014) that *'good transition is important for the country'* because having invested in the training of military personnel good transition can *'ensure that those individuals are in a position to be net contributors to society'* (Ashcroft, 2014:7). Thereby implying that those veterans who fail to transition successfully will be a burden to society. The economic costs of failed transition have also been well captured in FiMT's Transition Mapping Studies in 2013 and 2017. Research has also captured failed transition due to alcohol and drug misuse, mental health problems, suicide, criminality and violence, homelessness, and family breakdown (Derefinko et al., 2018; Mansfield et al., 2011; Moorhead, 2019; FiMT, 2013; 2017; Pedler et al., 2019).

There are no specific guidelines in the Armed Forces Covenant for finding civilian employment, but civilian organisations are encouraged to sign up and pledge their support to the Armed Forces community under the principles of the Covenant, but the type of support offers varies, depending on the organisation. In-house research by Deloitte LLP (2016) revealed that, in practice, businesses may not be ready for veterans in the civilian workforce, which was demonstrated by a lack of awareness and intrusive interview procedures. Moreover, employment is not guaranteed by the Covenant, but assistance with finding employment is one of the main aims of transition and this service is delivered by the Career Transition Partnership (CTP), which runs three-day workshops for service personnel that

explain the job market and opportunities within different sectors, help service personnel to identify their own skills, qualifications, and strengths, develop their approach to market, and provides advice on CV writing.

The MOD has recently (2019) introduced a new initiative, the Defence Holistic Transition Policy, covered later in this report, which is argued to offer bespoke support for members of the armed forces while they approach their date of discharge and asserts that the support is extended when the serving person leaves the forces. However, even with support from the CTP, some veterans struggle to gain and maintain employment status (Pike, 2016). Some of this could be attributed to the differences in the job pace and excitement of life when moving from a military role to a civilian role (Binks and Cambridge, 2018), as well as being challenged in finding a civilian role that utilises the specialist and unique skillset some may have gained (e.g., bomb disposal, sniper etc.). In many instances, military skills and qualifications are not recognised in the civilian labour market, despite extensive training and high-pressured experience. This can consequently lead to underemployment, and thereby poor-quality employment, as well as a mismatch in expectations and reality (Scullion et al., 2019). Veterans report a mismatch in expectations and reality, in both the types of roles available and the salaries achieved (SVC, 2016, Scullion et al., 2019).

Research also indicates other barriers for those transitioning in securing employment – cultural differences with work colleagues and in the workplace, including social and environmental differences as well as respect has been reported as being a significant source of frustration and disappointment among service leavers (SVC, 2016; Scullion et al., 2019; Kiernan, et al., 2021). Despite government initiatives, veterans continue to face these challenges, and there is increasing recognition of these difficulties as well as support programmes and intervention studies; for instance, FiMT, 2013 and 2017 studies, as well as the SVC 2016 study. These highlight the need to explore how gaining and securing veteran employment can be further strengthened.

Heal et al., (2019) identified that there is a stigma around help-seeking for the serving person and the family, particularly with regards to mental health and finances. This hinders help-seeking and information sharing on financial assistance. It was suggested that giving families the necessary financial

knowledge would empower them and the serving personnel with the knowledge of when and how to prepare for transition. Likewise, Heaver et al., (2018) identified finance or financial management among other things to be one of the most challenging aspects of transition. Research conducted by Scullion et al., (2019) considered experiences of veterans within the social security benefits system. It was identified from their veteran sample that many respondents had very limited prior experience and/or understanding of and how to access the UK benefits system. It highlights the need for providing information on financial management and social security benefits with resettlement information.

4.1.2 Mental Health and Wellbeing

Extensive research has been conducted on specific areas of service leavers such as mental health (Iversen and Greenberg, 2009; MoD, 2017; Nicholson and McLoughlin, 2019; House of Commons, 2018, 2019), homelessness, addiction, and substance misuse (Scullion et al., 2019; FiMT, 2013; Bergman et al., 2015). However, there has been greater emphasis on the problematic and difficult experiences of military personnel transitioning back to civilian life. This can lead to the misrepresentation of service leavers who have successfully transitioned to civilian life and indeed may contribute negatively to the issue. Furthermore, research also suggests that there is a greater reliance on research and data from the United States (Caddick, 2016) and these tend to be biased towards those suffering from post-traumatic stress and ignores the range of situations that service leavers undergo during the transition to civilian life. These studies have provided an insight into certain aspects of the transition journey by illuminating different aspects of the transition process, however, these limitations and the scarcity of such research suggests that there is still a major research gap in this area. Furthermore, the literature pertaining to military transition is often not contained within one specific discipline, and is spread across several disciplines such as – social sciences, health, mental health, human resource management, military studies etc. (Caddick, 2016).

As mentioned earlier, there is some evidence which suggests that mental health outcomes could be poorer in veterans, however, various factors can explain this including those associated with service. Concurrently there are predisposing

vulnerabilities that individuals may bring when they join the forces. Hence, those with pre-service adversity and veterans who develop mental ill health during service are more likely to be vulnerable to post-service disadvantage including unemployment, homelessness, isolation, and poorer health in general (Harden & Murphy, 2018; Hatch et al., 2013; Iversen & Greenberg, 2009; Iversen, Nikolaou, et al., 2005; Macmanus & Wessely, 2013). Likewise, veterans from the reserves (Iversen & Greenberg, 2009) and Early Service Leavers (ESL) (Buckman et al., 2013; Burdett et al., 2020) are the two additional groups that are a risk of developing post-military mental health problems. This could be attributed to these groups not having access to the same support networks as regular personnel. In fact, length of service has been found to be a protector for adverse mental health outcomes (Bergman, Mackay, Smith, & Pell, 2015). Although the exact reasons for this are unclear, it may be due to pre-existing conditions or childhood vulnerabilities (Murphy and Turgoose, 2019; Murphy et al., 2019) not picked up during recruitment, and which may manifest during early service and lead to early discharge (voluntary and involuntary). In addition, self and public stigma surrounding mental health in general and mental health in military personnel is a significant barrier to gaining the support needed (Coleman et al., 2017; Stevelink et al., 2019). Often veterans are reluctant to seek support for mental ill health by blaming themselves for their difficulties. This is further compounded by concerns of being judged in a negative manner where a diagnosis and/or treatment may have long-term occupational implications (Gordon et al., 2020).

4.1.3 Housing

Subsidised housing/accommodation is usually available to military personnel and their immediate families during service. While the cost of this accommodation is covered by the service personnel themselves, the payment for this is automatically deducted before their salary is paid, resulting in limited budgetary responsibilities (Elbogen, 2014). Upon discharge, service leavers need to find a new place to live and failing to do this can have a detrimental impact on their future success and wellbeing (e.g., resulting in sofa surfing or even homelessness). However, this can be particularly challenging for those who joined the forces in early adulthood and are unfamiliar with the housing situation since joining. As such, housing has

become a significant focus in the current transition/resettlement process, as well as a focus of the Armed Forces Covenant (MoD, 2020a; Fleuty et al., 2021). Furthermore, the establishment of the Office for Veterans' Affairs has increased national and international visibility of veterans, their families and serving personnel, and has highlighted some of the problems they face in transition. Indeed, changes have been implemented to the guidance on social housing, such that it now also considers estranged spouses and veterans, resulting in amendments to the rules on eligibility for social housing. The requirement to have resided in an area for two years has been eliminated for veterans, and former service spouses, who have health issues related to previous service. Only limited formal academic literature has considered the housing policy changes for service leavers and veterans in the UK ; there has been greater reliance on grey literature (Fleuty et al., 2021).

The Scottish Housing Guide for People Leaving the Armed Forces and Ex-Service Personnel and the Social Housing Allocations in Scotland – A Practice Guide (a practice guidance on social housing allocations) was published by the Scottish Government in 2018 and 2019. However, the effect of this guidance is yet to be assessed. The devolved nature of the four nations demonstrates one of the additional complexities of transition in the UK, as each nation can develop separate policies and support with varied access rules for service leavers. Such policies can be introduced at different times and can go unobserved by those in transition. While recent statistics from the MoD on homeownership, renting or saving with the intention to purchase, demonstrates considerable success (MoD, 2019a, 2020b) there can also be a period of homelessness for many in transition (Dunn, 2019; Fleuty et al., 2021).

As mentioned above, the four nations manage homelessness independently, and therefore there is no breakdown of statistics on veteran status for homelessness prevention in England, Wales, or Northern Ireland. At present, only Scotland collects information on whether an applicant had previously served in the Armed Forces (Scottish Government, 2020). While it is evident that there have been policy and practice developments in relation to the housing needs for those in transition and veterans, the legislative disparity between the four devolved nations has the potential to complicate the transition for individuals and their families. There remains a need for developing longitudinal data on housing choices,

problems, and homelessness across the four nations that can be adequately compared, and which has the potential to be linked to veterans and their family's wellbeing.

4.1.4 Education, Skills and Training

In England, policies, processes, and programs have been developed focused at addressing elements of support for those leaving the military, to assist with their preparations for entering civilian life and for successful transition. Education and employment programs play a vital role in veterans' transition into civilian life, as these programs help bridge the gap between military service and the civilian workforce.

The Services have a network of Individual Education & Resettlement Officers who provide group and one-to-one resettlement support. Other practical mechanisms that have been developed include that of Personal Planning and Development Programmes and HARDFACTS¹⁸ models to help prepare employees for transition. These approaches are aimed at shifting the focus of transition away from a finite resettlement period to one where Service Personnel consider their departure from the Forces and throughout their career, by evaluating their skills, qualifications, and personal circumstances. This is one of the areas of focus in the MOD's new Holistic Transition Policy.

In Scotland, the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's (SVC) reports in 2015 and 2016 suggest that while there are several policy initiatives and innovative schemes for employment or self-employment, none specifically aimed at veterans. However, CTP offers support to service leavers, and this is most beneficial for those who served the longest in the Forces. As the contract with CTP was coming to an end in 2015, it was recommended that the Scottish Government, associated agencies, and further and higher education sectors should work closely with the UK Government for more effective linking with the established employability policy and delivery frameworks in Scotland (SVC, 2015).

¹⁸ HARDFACTS - Health, Accommodation, Relocation, Drugs & Alcohol, Finance, Attitude, Children & family, Training, Support Agencies.

Accrediting the skills, experiences and qualifications gained during military service continue to pose a challenge for employers, who are unable to map these to civilian qualifications. This is further complicated for those in Scotland, as mapping is done against skills widely used across England and Wales and not against Scottish qualifications. This has the potential of putting those who settle in Scotland at a disadvantage, due to Scotland's separate education system and qualification authority. There also remains a need to consider the Further and Higher education sector for veterans to return to education to develop their skills.

Scotland already provides classes and individual support to address educational shortfalls for those still serving, and the onus here is on their education centre and military chain of command. Indeed, specific support is already available for those with learning difficulties. The MoD has now made it compulsory for new recruits joining with low levels and literacy and numeracy to attend classes aimed at bringing them to the standard required in preparation for promotion and transition to civilian employment. This is sustained by ensuring that new recruits cannot advance to the next stage of training until they have achieved the required standards. Likewise, for veterans there is support from a variety of sources – local authority community-based support services, colleges, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and several Third sector organisations. The Big Plus initiative is for anyone who wants to improve numeracy and literacy skills and is free. However, service leavers and veterans are often unaware of the availability of this support. It was recommended that initiatives such Big Plus and other community-based schemes should be promoted further, with more prominent displays around military bases and on the CTP website (SVC, 2015). SDS and charities should promote the benefits of improved literacy and numeracy for ESLs and directing initiatives to service leavers as well.

In the past the military apprenticeship scheme was only available for those embarking on a technical career; however, this is now available to all recruits and is built around the needs of basic military training, and now leads to widely recognised SVQ/NVQ qualifications. Employers, higher and further education sectors, and other organisations still have difficulty in recognising many of the qualifications obtained during a military career and have little understanding of what it offers as relevant skills and personal attributes. In order to address this, the MoD has begun to map the training across SCQF while promotion and career

courses are mostly recognised by organisations such as the Institute of Leadership and Management, the Chartered Management Institute, and City and Guilds. Furthermore, CTP, RFEA, and Officers Association Scotland help translate military qualifications into more readily understood equivalents for a civilian employer. Yet, frustration still exists with many service leavers and veterans who believe skills and qualifications gained in the military are neither properly understood nor appreciated. Hence, it was recommended that the Veterans Employability Strategic Working Group should produce a plan for building understanding and recognition amongst Scottish employers of the skills and qualifications gained in the military (SVC, 2015). The Group should also consider whether the current system for translating, and mapping qualifications could be simplified, and how it might be better utilised and understood.

SVC (2016) argued that despite the many incentives and well-documented employment, social, and health advantages that result from better academic, technical, or professional qualifications, service leavers rarely pursue a further or higher education in Scotland or even consider this as part of their transition process. As such, it was recommended that Colleges Scotland should consider ways of better engaging the veteran's community to persuade more to consider a college education. Colleges Scotland should also develop closer links with CTP and employment charities, as they already provide advice and support to Service Leavers and veterans and are well placed to assist Colleges Scotland. Likewise, the Modern Apprenticeship program, as well as flexible learning options to Early Service Leavers, veterans who would benefit from up-skilling or retraining, and spouses and partners, flexible learning options to Early Service Leavers, veterans who would benefit from up-skilling or retraining, and spouses and partners should be developed by the Scottish Government, SDS, and Colleges Scotland. While a deterrent to entering education might be a drop in income and the associated stress on family life, this could be overcome by employers sponsoring individuals to undertake part-time college studies in conjunction with their day-to-day employment. As such, it was recommended that SG should work with employers to identify ways of supporting, and perhaps incentivising, sponsorship schemes that would allow a greater number of Service Leavers and veterans to undertake college studies in conjunction with full-time employment.

As recommended in the report A Blueprint for Fairness (2016), widening universities' admissions policies is equally applicable to veterans who have the potential to succeed in Higher Education. And as such all universities should consider how access thresholds can be specifically applied to the veterans community. And these new thresholds should be advertised and promoted widely in the military and veterans sectors. Furthermore, the expansion of 'articulation pathways' – progression from college to university, where full credit is awarded for prior learning, is a powerful means of advancing fairer access to higher education. As with further education, graduate apprenticeships (in IT, Civil Engineering and Engineering) are a further means by which the veterans community could access higher education. Veterans may also be able to take advantage of the Enhanced Learning Credits available through the MoD. But these cannot be accessed until veterans have a full understanding of the support available that would enable them to make an informed decision. Hence, it was recommended that the Scottish Funding Council should work with relevant organisations to produce material designed specifically for the veterans community including finance and support options for those enrolling at college or university (SVC, 2016). Colleges Scotland and Universities Scotland have worked with their members and Veterans Scotland to establish a network of champions across all colleges and universities, and there now Armed Forces Champions in colleges and universities since 2019 (SVC, 2020). The champions can act as the first point of contact for members of the ex-Service community applying for, or undertaking, further and higher education. However, the impact of these initiatives on those thinking of transition, in the process of transition, and veterans and their families remains to be assessed.

4.1.5 Military Families

Families also transition with the service person, and they play a vital role in facilitating successful transitions (Fossey et al., 2019; Heal et al., 2019). While the service leaver is offered some support as he or she leaves the military to return to civilian life, the family must manage its own return on both a practical and emotional level. The family is tasked with the responsibility of negotiating their own adjustment to a new way of living while also ensuring that the service leaver

is supported through the transition journey. The role of the spouse as a key actor is often overlooked. Service spouses are also affected by transition, frequently experiencing significant changes in their lifestyle. They play a critical role in seeking and gaining new information and networks, and organising work, schooling, and accommodation needs for the family.

A rapid synthesis conducted by Gribble et al., (2018) reviewed the policy definitions of military families in the UK, the US, Australia, and Canada which acknowledged that the definition of both military and veteran families was only identified by the US Department of Defence. The other three countries referred to family within the context of access to benefits or services for those within the military community. However, irrespective of the definitions set within the context of policy, military families should be considered with respect to their relationship with the military, as this relationship can shape and define the experience of the family through the transition period (Gribble et al., 2018).

The provision for families is often a derivative form of the services provided for veterans. Commonly provided forms of family support included case management or care coordination; mental health and substance abuse; counselling, and information and referral; support for housing and employment assistance; family members can also receive disability compensation under varying circumstances.

Very little is currently known about the experiences of military families and how they cope during the transition period and what could be done to improve outcomes for them in Scotland. Furthermore, the impact of the experiences of military families during service and through transition need to be better understood, as it is not known if families struggle during the transition process and what effect military culture has on their ability to function. In the foreword to the MOD's new Holistic Transition Policy, the Chief of Defence People states that transition is, and will remain, a core element of the MOD's Families Strategy, and future research might consider to what extent that is the case.

4.1.6 Acculturation and Post Life Identity

Resettlement is the more commonly used term that describes the formal process and procedures that individuals leaving the military undergo as they transition, as

well as the support that they receive during transition. The MOD sees its JSP 100, on Transition, as an 'authoritative' document for staff responsible for the development, planning and delivery of Tri-service holistic transition support. Unlike previous resettlement programmes, it is argued that JSP 100 is intended as a handbook to support individuals and their families in one place and to assist with successful transition by creating a cultural shift in the way the personnel think about resettlement and leaving the forces, regardless of length of service, including ESLs (with less than four years' service) (MoD, 2019b). However, it is too early to assess the impact of this measure on those in transition.

To understand how military culture influences transitioning military employees, it is necessary to determine what is meant by culture. Culture is a complex term which holds multiple meanings based on its context (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, 2012). Raud (2013) proposed a simple definition of culture where it is a loosely tied set of representations, texts, and practices that give meaning to a person's environment. Cultural practices are the things that people do and actively participate in, which in turn creates meaning and maintains meaning, making culture a learned and essentially a group phenomenon. This lends to the understanding of military culture where veterans often describe the camaraderie of their military family, and the influence of the military culture on their lives. And while the Tri-services employ different organisational structures, they share certain traits that emanate from the specific purpose of producing operationally ready units (Siebold, 2001). Bonds of loyalty and collective trust are further predicated through the creation of a collective military identity which fortifies the military personnel's sense of belonging. Furthermore, the Tri-services includes a built-in social life (for instance, accommodation, medical care, schooling etc.) both for the individual and their families and can take the form and size of towns on land or on naval vessels. To ensure the security of these spaces and for the training needs of the units, such spaces are often behind protective fencing and other barriers, but also in isolated locations. Such environments can make the inhabitants develop a sense of coherence, meaning and kinship that they perceive does not exist elsewhere (Pedlar et al., 2019).

A few defining characteristics of military culture include that of unity, discipline, physical fitness, self-sacrifice, and a greater emphasis on group action which fortifies camaraderie, all of which creates deep bonds and an in-group identity

(Grimell, 2015; Tajfel, 2010). The foundation of such characteristics can be situated in the basic training that recruits receive, where they are stripped of personal identity markers and possessions such as civilian clothes and transposed with the uniform which is a symbolic practical measure of initial and then enduring means of reinforcing military identity (Carré, 2019). Acclimatisation to military culture is further strengthened through the training regime and indoctrination of military standards, behaviours, ethics, and values designed to transform these former civilians into military personnel, or in other words occupational transition.

The development of close psychological attachments also creates a distance between the military and civilian worlds (Coll et al., 2011). It is therefore conceivable that transitioning from a collective military culture to a civilian culture that is largely individualistic can create some problems in transition. The lasting mark that rigorous training and socialisation into military culture creates is irrefutable. Hence it is likely that some form of renegotiation of self will be attempted by the individual as a means to understand how to fit in within the civilian world, which they may have become unfamiliar with. Not only do service leavers need to plan the logistics of post-military life whilst they are still serving (e.g., employment, housing, finance, etc.), they may also need to build a new social network and most poignantly an understanding of their identity without the reinforcement of the armed forces culture. Yet there is very little training for transition into the civilian culture, apart from the resettlement training and support that is delivered through CTP. However, the scope of support packages varies by length of service, and registration with CTP remains voluntary. Furthermore, there lacks empirical data of the success claimed by CTP in delivering cost-effective programs of resettlement. Considering the military as a culture can add to the understanding of transitional difficulties of veterans when they advance from one cultural environment to another.

The circumstances surrounding discharge will be unique to each service leaver, however, what unites this broader group is their experience of detachment from the civilian world, underpinned by a lengthy separation from family and friends (MacLean and Elder, 2007). This idea of separation is important when considering the age of recruits and their knowledge of the world prior to their enlistments, as over time this separation creates a disparity in the lives of service leavers, when considering social reintegration. While some of the values and traits can be an

advantage in the transition process, there are other traits that can be a hinderance in reinventing themselves as civilians (Trussa and Castro, 2019).

Longitudinal studies of Second World War veterans laid the foundation for the life-course view of veterans' experiences (Spiro et al., 2016). The life-course view considers early physical, psychological, and socioeconomic influences as independently, interactively, and cumulatively affecting wellbeing later in life (Hertzman and Power, 2003). As such it is argued that armed forces employees experience a variety of transitions during their service, including rank promotion, unit transfers, and operational deployments that can have an impact on them and their families. However, there are two transitions that are particularly unique to the military life course: the cultural shift from civilian to military service and the cultural shift from military to post-service life (Atuel and Castro, 2019; Robinson et al., 2017). And social identity theory is a useful way of understanding what happens to people during major transitions as military and civilian transition (Atuel and Castro, 2019). An individual's social identity is derived from their membership with valued social groups and is part of their self-concept (Tajfel and Turner, 1985).

Bergman et al., (2014) described the transition from military to civilian life as a 'culture shock', with the initial shock occurring when joining the forces, and a 'reverse' culture shock when leaving the forces. However, it can be argued that culture shock may be more salient for those who joined the forces at a younger age, as they would be transferring into a culture where they never acquired any competences or capital (Castro and Dursun, 2019). Indeed, discharge from the forces occurs in several ways – voluntarily (on request or planned retirement), involuntarily (medical, end of service contract, downsizing of the force, or unsatisfactory service/misconduct) (Blackburn, 2016). However, recent research indicates that the armed forces is no longer considered as a lifelong career with retirement prospects (FiMT, 2017; Iversen et al., 2005; MacLean et al., 2019). Numerous authors have described the varying degrees of identity disruption and culture shock that occurs on discharge from service, such as – loss of sense of purpose, feelings of being alienated from the military world, relationship breakdown, weak sense of belonging to the civilian community, anger, and resentment towards the system (for those discharged involuntarily), etc. (Ahern et al., 2015; Keeling, 2018; Ashcroft, 2016).

Individuals experience identity challenges when joining and forces as well as when leaving the forces, and give the unique set of beliefs, values, and cultural rules within the armed forces, it could be argued that both enlistment and discharge involves a process of acculturation. Acculturation is the process by which members of one group culturally and psychologically adopt the beliefs and behaviours of another group (Sam and Berry, 2010). Here the armed forces move beyond being just an occupation to an all-encompassing lifestyle to which individuals identify with to varying degrees (McCaslin et al., 2021). Readjustment difficulties can span the intra- and interpersonal and occupational domains (Bertoni et al., 2014; Koenig et al., 2014; McCormick et al., 2019). A study investigating transitional issues among those who recently left the forces found that many felt disconnected from their civilian support system and missed the lack of structure and care provided to them by their military family (Ahern et al., 2015). It was noted that many found comfort in reconnection with other veterans, and some found purpose by engaging in peer support activities for other recent leavers that struggled to connect with services within the community (Sargent, 2009). Other studies have described veterans lacking a sense of purpose in their work and a lack of connectedness with their co-workers (Koenig et al., 2014). Often the changes experienced by the leaver after military service may not be fully understood by civilian family, friends, and co-workers. Hence an individual's identification with military culture sheds important insights into their experiences of transition.

However, there is little evidence of the effectiveness of many of these operational frameworks on the veterans and their families in transition. There remains the need to validate these theories and refinement of the frameworks for practical applications to assess their effectiveness.

4.2 Summary

For the majority, the challenge of leaving relates to finding future employment and caring for their families. For most Service Personnel and their families this is understood and, for the most part, accepted: change – of role, rank, location, family home etc. - is an integral part of Service life. The structures that support Service Personnel and their families, such as regular employment, opportunities

for advancement through gaining skills and qualifications, housing, healthcare, allowances, support with children's education and sporting and leisure facilities, for example, all help mitigate this change to some extent.

Leaving the Services presents various new challenges. Many of the services provided through the military system, and sometimes taken for granted, are suddenly no longer available: a job; accommodation (the majority of Service Leavers do not own their own home); medical and dental care; a new group of friends. Just as importantly, Service Leavers may have to find all these things within a new, potentially less supportive environment, perhaps without an immediate network of peers and like-minded people. Moreover, they may have to cope with any service-related health or mental health issues, all while supporting a family; it is hardly surprising that many find transition challenging.

Some Service Personnel leave naturally at the end of their contract with the military; some decide to leave early because they want to do something else with their life; many discover that service and family life are incompatible. For some there may be the requirement for medical discharge. Notwithstanding the process through which they leave, it is important to understand the landscape of transition and the challenges that the service personnel/veteran may face during the transition to civilian life. That said, whatever the reason for leaving the Services, the Armed Forces Covenant¹⁹ makes clear that the whole nation has a moral obligation to members of the Armed Forces and their families; it is therefore important to understand the challenges that Service Personnel are likely to face on leaving the military, and during the process of transition, to best support their journey to becoming a civilian and a veteran.

The following chapter considers the initial findings from our online survey and interviews with key stakeholders.

¹⁹ The UK Government, 2016 [An explanation of the Armed Forces Covenant - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/544212/afcv-2016-01-20.pdf)

5 Phase 1 - Initial Findings

This research adopted a mixed methods approach drawing, as stated above, on both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. This approach maximises the potential to understand experiences of resettlement/transition from military to civilian life in Scotland. While qualitative methods help enrich the research through the creation of unrestrained discussion of contextual issues, barriers, gaps and the level and quality in provision, many of the issues raised in the qualitative research may mask general trends. The absence of the large demographic data set meant it was essential to administer an online scoping survey to establish the general picture. The online survey was launched following an internal pilot which was essential in testing the adequacy and internal validity of the survey. Feedback from pilot subjects helped identify ambiguous, unnecessary, and difficult questions, as well as an opportunity to re-word and re-scales questions as required.

To reduce sampling bias, the survey was distributed through various online channels including but not limited to social media, email, ENU Centre for Military Research, Education and Public Engagement website, and QR code. Additionally, members in the advisory group, key stakeholders as well as other organisational contacts played a significant part in the distribution of the survey. The total number of cases available for analysis (N=127), with (N=2) declining consent. Phase 2 and Phase 3 will include data from active personnel (both thinking about transition and in the process of transition), as well as families and significant others.

This section provides a socio-demographic profile of the veterans and addresses their attributes, background characteristics and the type (and longevity) of their service within the armed forces.

5.1 Initial Quantitative Findings: Profile of Veterans

This section examines the profile of the veterans who participated in the online survey. Respondents expressed several reasons for joining the Forces, ranging from family heritage/tradition; seeking adventure, job, and travel opportunities;

to escape their hometown; career development opportunities after leaving school; and desire to fight and defend the country.

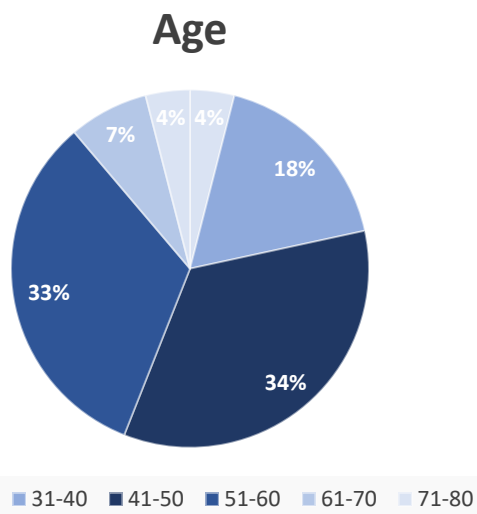


Figure 5: Age Range of Veterans

A plurality of respondents is, as can be seen in Figure 5 above, from the 41–50-year age group (34%) and the average age of the sample is 49. A significant proportion of the sample is also from the 51–60-year age group (33%), followed by those from the 31–40-year age group (18%).

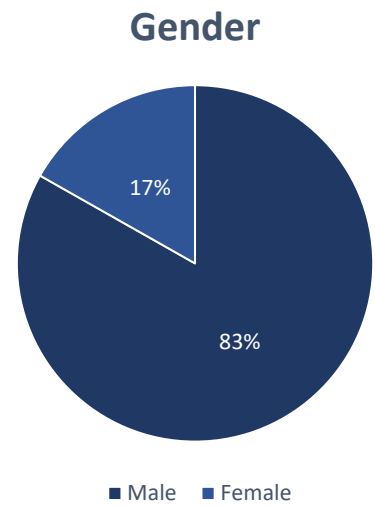


Figure 6: Gender of Veterans

The sample is male dominated with as evident in Figure 6 above with 83% male and 17%²⁰ female.

²⁰ Figures rounded. Following advice from our Advisory Group we have circulated our survey further to get more responses from female respondents.

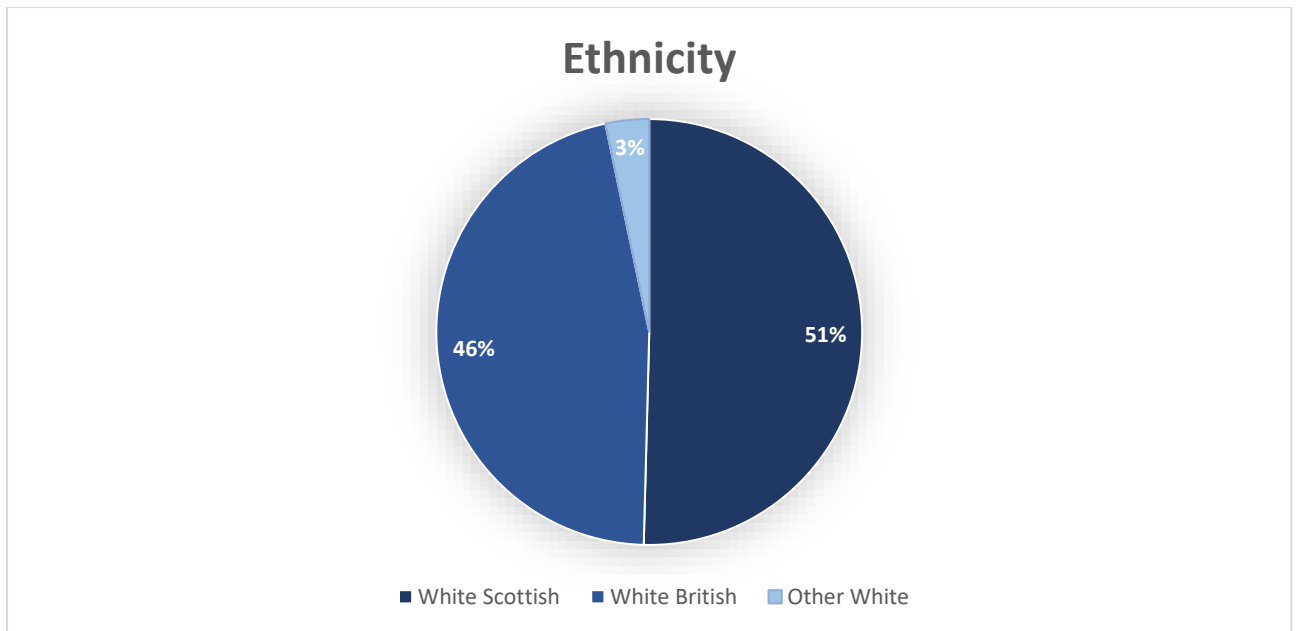


Figure 7: Ethnicity of Veterans

The sample predominantly self-identified as White Scottish (49%) and White British (45%). A very small number of participants identified as Other White (3%), and there were significantly limited number of respondents who self-identified as White Welsh (1%) and well as from minority ethnic groups (1%)²¹.

²¹ Our survey remains open as we actively seek responses from those from minority ethnic groups for a more representative sample.

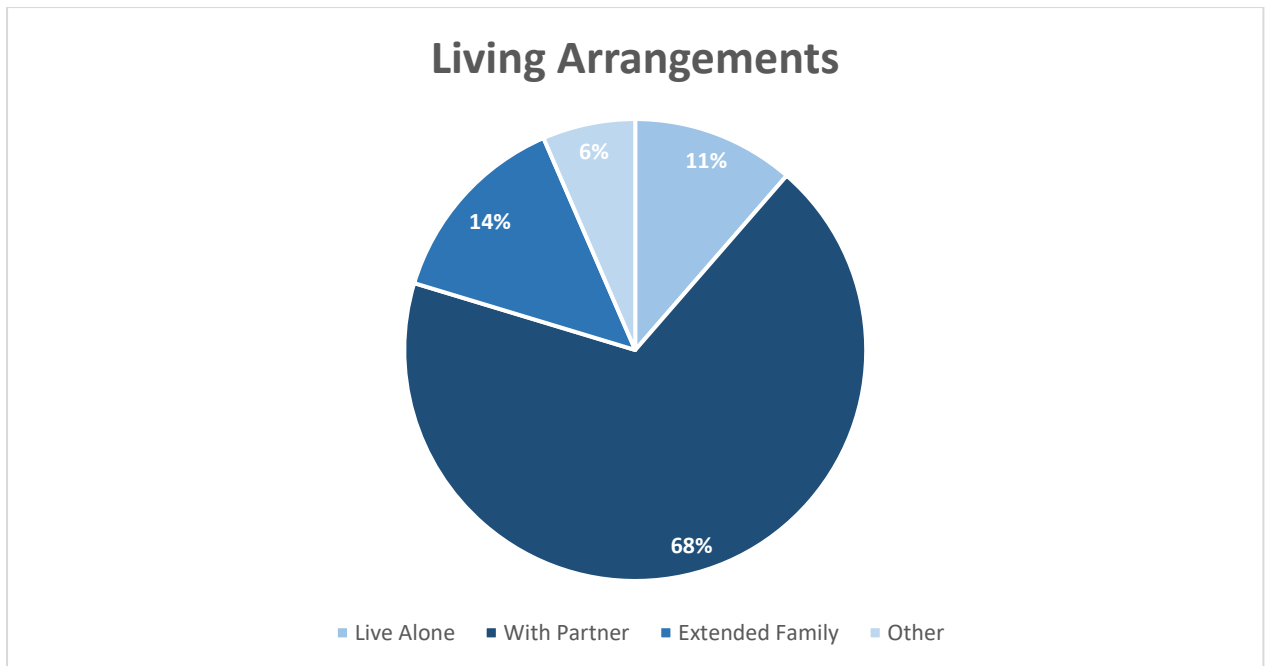


Figure 8: Living Arrangements of Veterans

A significant proportion of the respondents live with their partner (68%), followed by those who live with extended family (e.g., son, daughter, parents etc.) (14%), as can be seen in Figure 8 above. The remaining respondents either live alone (11%) or reside. There were also respondents that indicated that they resided in alternative accommodation (6%) for instance, in rental accommodation or identified as being a homeowner; and finally, 1% preferred not to say²².

²² Figures rounded.

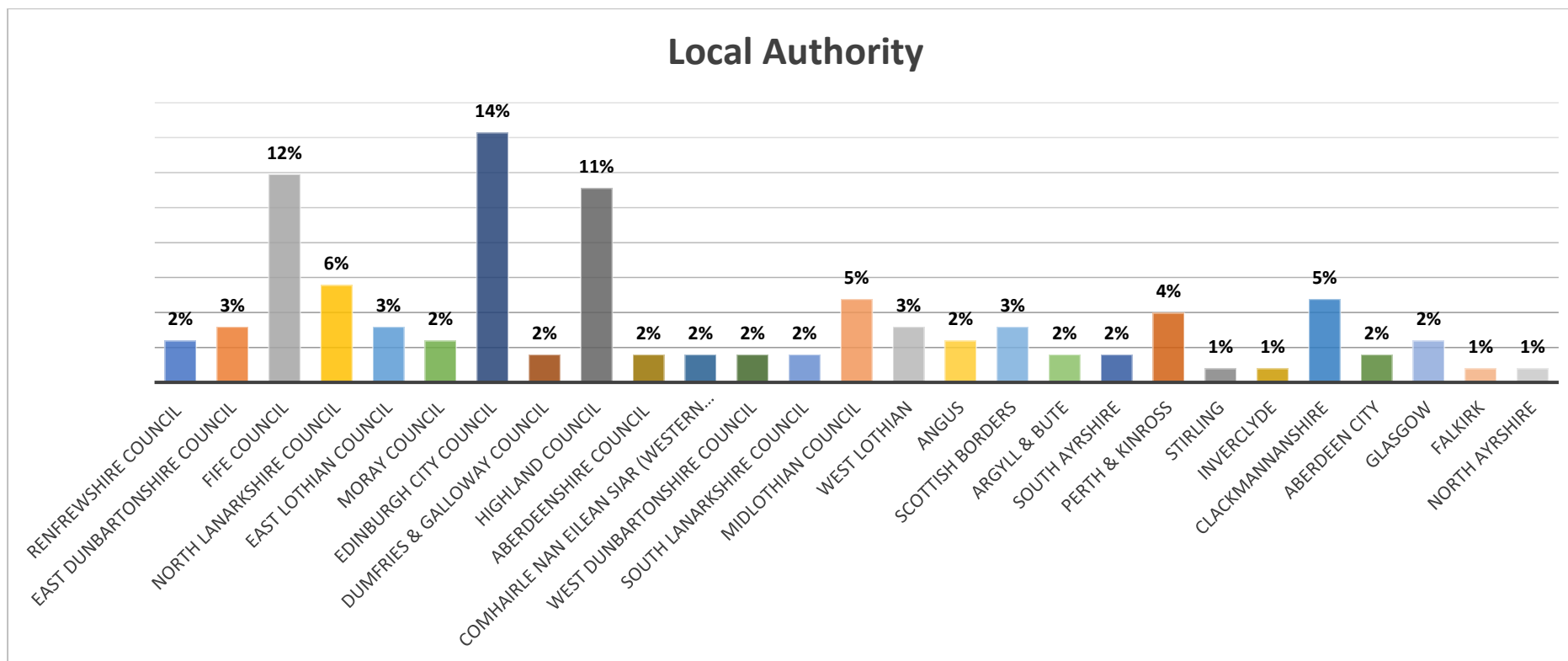


Figure 9: Local Authority where Veterans Live

A significant proportion of the sample include veterans who reside in Edinburgh City Council (14%), followed by Fife Council (12%) and Highland Council (11%). Majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with their local authority. Some of the reasons cited include: good neighbourhood and friendly neighbours, scenic location, suitable area for local school for children, substantial Armed Forces community in the area, good access to local amenities and easy commute to and from work as well as cities, opportunities for outdoor activities due to rural living. There were also those who settled in the specific area as they grew up there, had friends and family or were in the area due to work. A few individuals noted dissatisfaction of their local authority due to poor employment opportunities, dilapidated infrastructure, and disproportionate service for increased council tax. Others argued that the current political ideologies made it difficult for them to identify as a veteran due to fear of stigma.

Armed Service

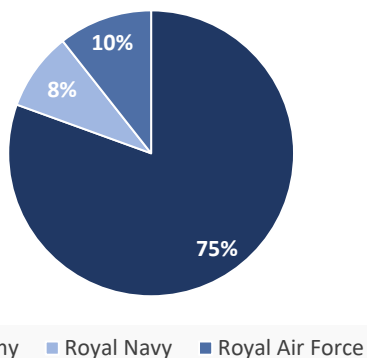


Figure 10: Armed Services of Veterans

Figure 10 above reveals respondents' background in the armed services, with 75% coming from the British Army. However, significant proportions also served in the Royal Air Force (10%), and the Royal Navy (8%)²³.

Rank

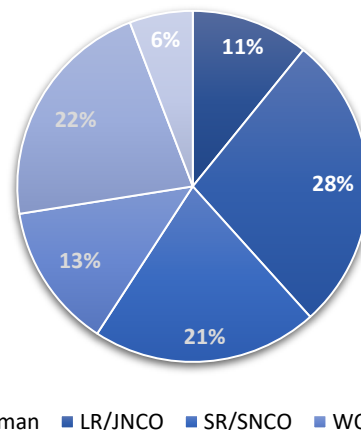


Figure 11: Rank of Veterans

While a greater proportion of the respondents are of a lower rank, with a majority from Leading Rate/Junior NCO (28%), there are also those of a higher rank, Junior Officer (22%), followed by those in Senior Rating/Senior NCO (21%), and Warrant Officer 1 or 2 (13%)²⁴, as can be seen in Figure 11 above. The average length of service was almost 18 years²⁵ with the lowest length of service being 4 years and the highest length of service being 42 years.

²³ Figures rounded.

²⁴ Figures rounded.

²⁵ Figures rounded.

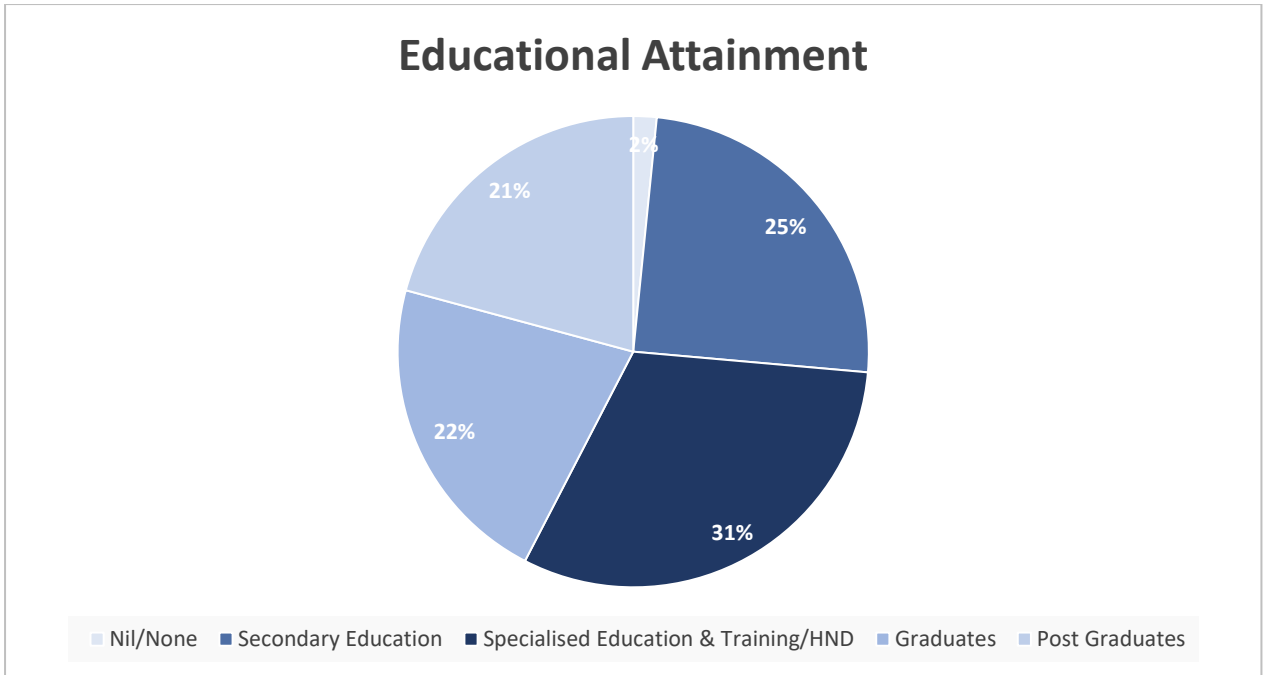


Figure 12: Educational Attainment of Veterans

Figure 12 above indicates that a significant proportion of the respondents have attained a specialised education and training qualification (31%), closely followed by those who have acquired secondary education (25%). However, a significant proportion are also graduates (22%) and postgraduates (21%).

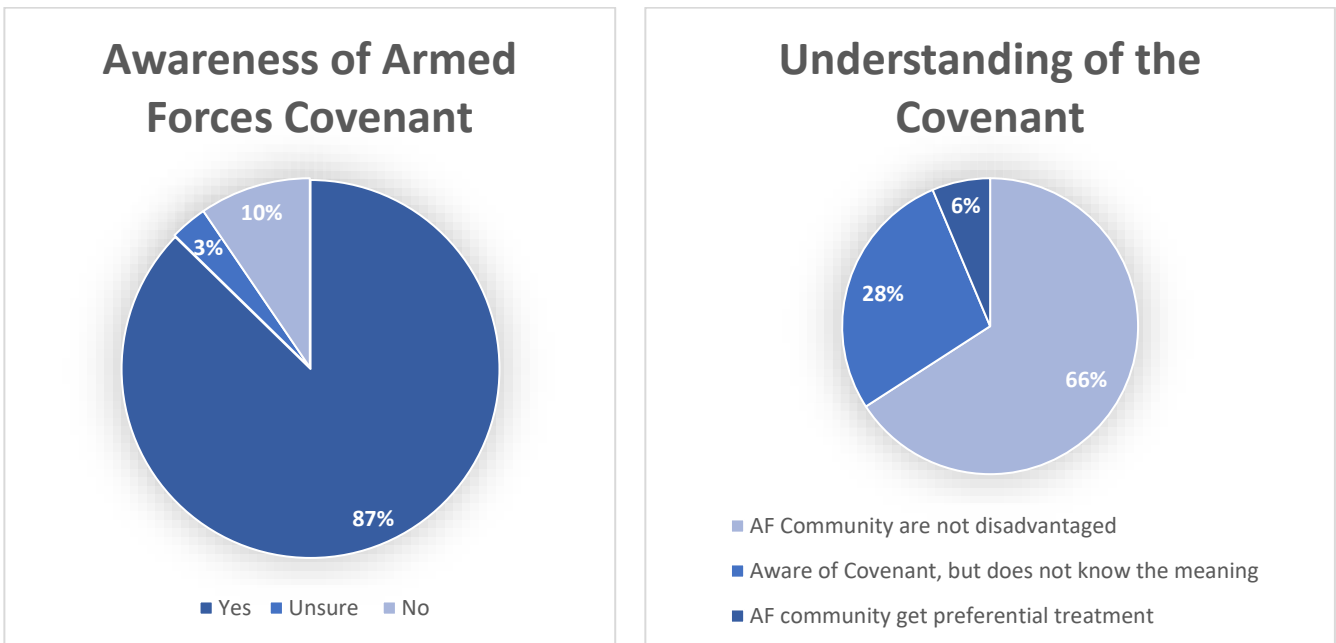


Figure 13: Awareness & Understanding of Armed Forces Covenant

A significant proportion (87%) of the respondents indicated that they were aware of the Armed Forces Covenant, however 10% indicated that did not know about the Covenant. Likewise, while a large majority of the respondents express greater understanding of the Covenant (66%), a significant proportion (28%) have expressed that do not know understand the relevant of the Covenant. Indeed, this lack of awareness requires greater consideration and will be explored further in the qualitative components of the study.

5.1.1 Experiences of Transition

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

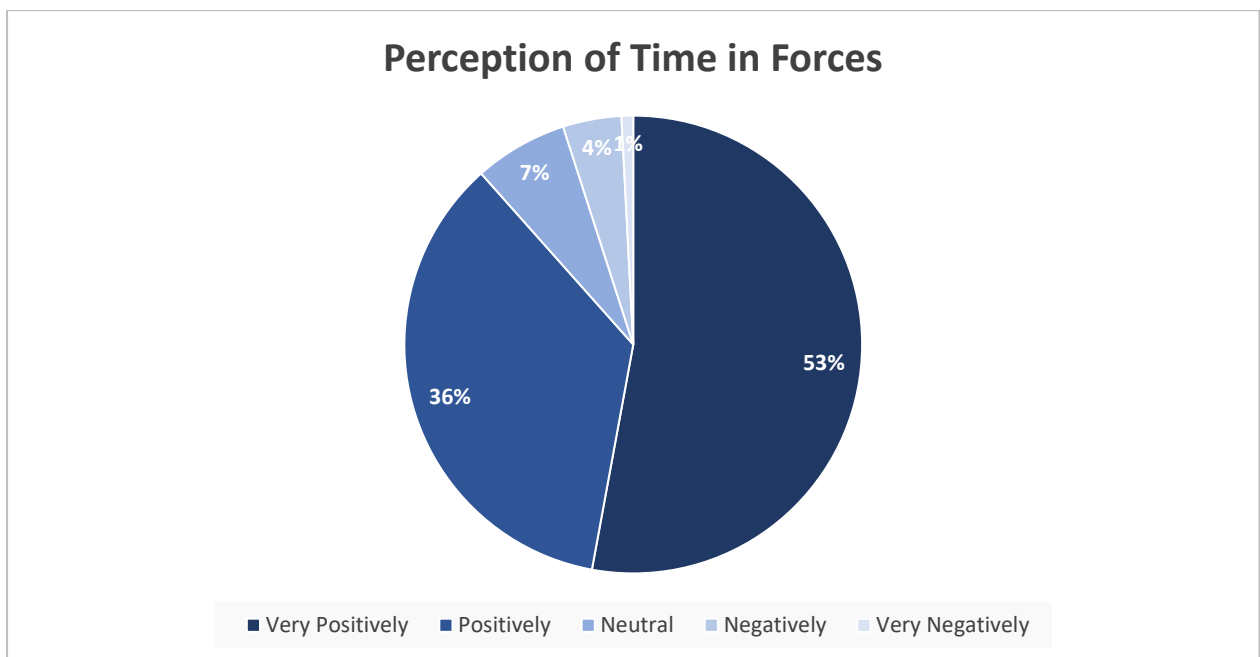


Figure 14: Perception of Time in Armed Forces

A significant proportion of the respondents perceived their time in the Armed Forces very positively (53%) or positively (36%), as evident in Figure 14 above. Respondents were asked about the most impactful aspect of their basic training. Several respondents described camaraderie, discipline, resilience, and teamwork as being the most impactful. However, others expressed that their instructor had

the most impact on their basic training as "...quality instruction provided me with the correct tools to progress within the Army."

Furthermore, participants were asked whether they have been treated positively or negatively due to their connection with the Armed Forces. While majority of the respondents said they were neither positively nor negatively treated, several participants experienced positive treatment. For instance, one participant stated that they had experienced positive treatment "Positively - for what I have done and what I stand for". However, a large majority argued that they had experienced negative treatment, in particular, gaining employment due to negative stereotypes of being a veteran. There were also those who reported experiencing both negative and positive treatment. For instance, several participants noted "Like many, I have experienced both. Negatively when applying for work and my previous experience was not understood. Positive when requiring support from NHS/ DWP."

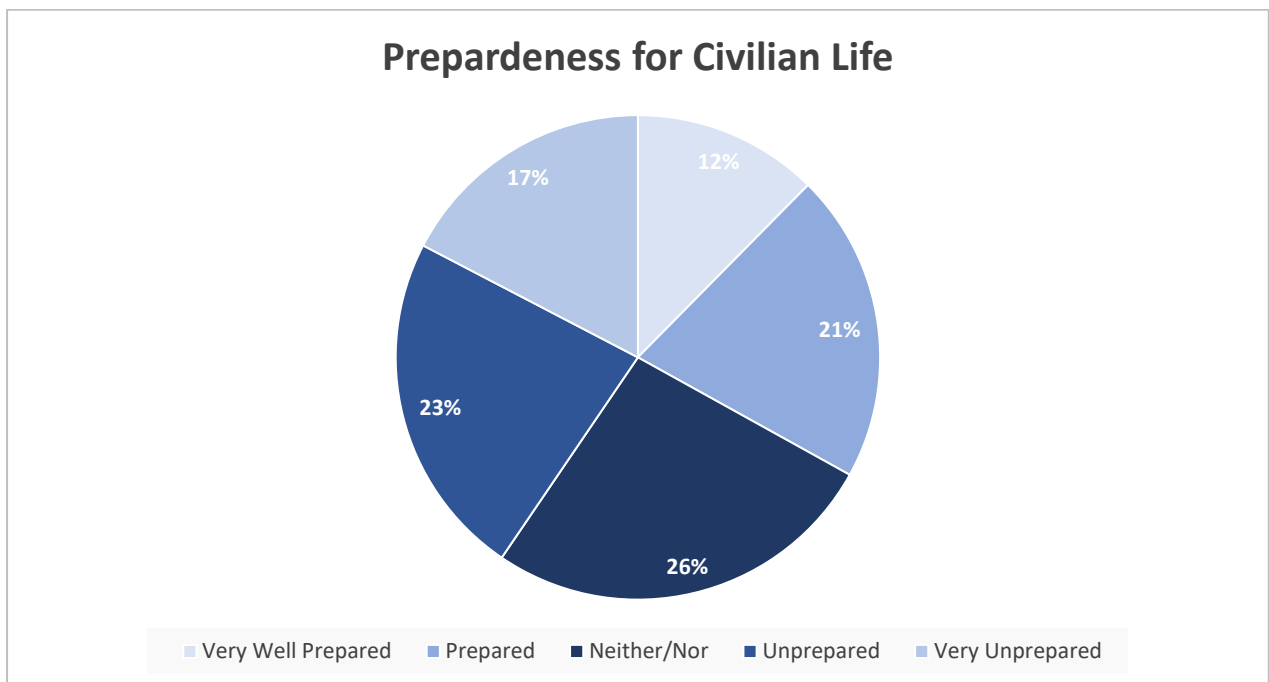


Figure 15: Preparedness for Civilian Life

Figure 15 above, demonstrates that a large proportion expressed uncertainty (26%) about their preparedness for civilian life. However, a large proportion felt unprepared (23%) for civilian life. Respondents were also asked to provide three

words or phrases about their thoughts of resettlement, several respondents described it as "*Scary, apprehensive, unknown*" as well as "*Not ready, fear and just general anxiety of having to leave the military life.*" Others expressed uncertainty with some expressing positive thoughts but indicated that they lacked job application, interview, and CV building skills. Furthermore, they were asked whether their view of transition changed after discharge. Responses varied with some expressing no change, others felt lost, underprepared, and found the training from CTP unhelpful in securing employment. Some also described the difficulty in translating the education and training acquired in the Forces into civilian qualification, as well as stigma of being a veteran and stereotypes in acquiring employment. Yet others felt prepared and described the importance of self-development and early preparation whilst in service.

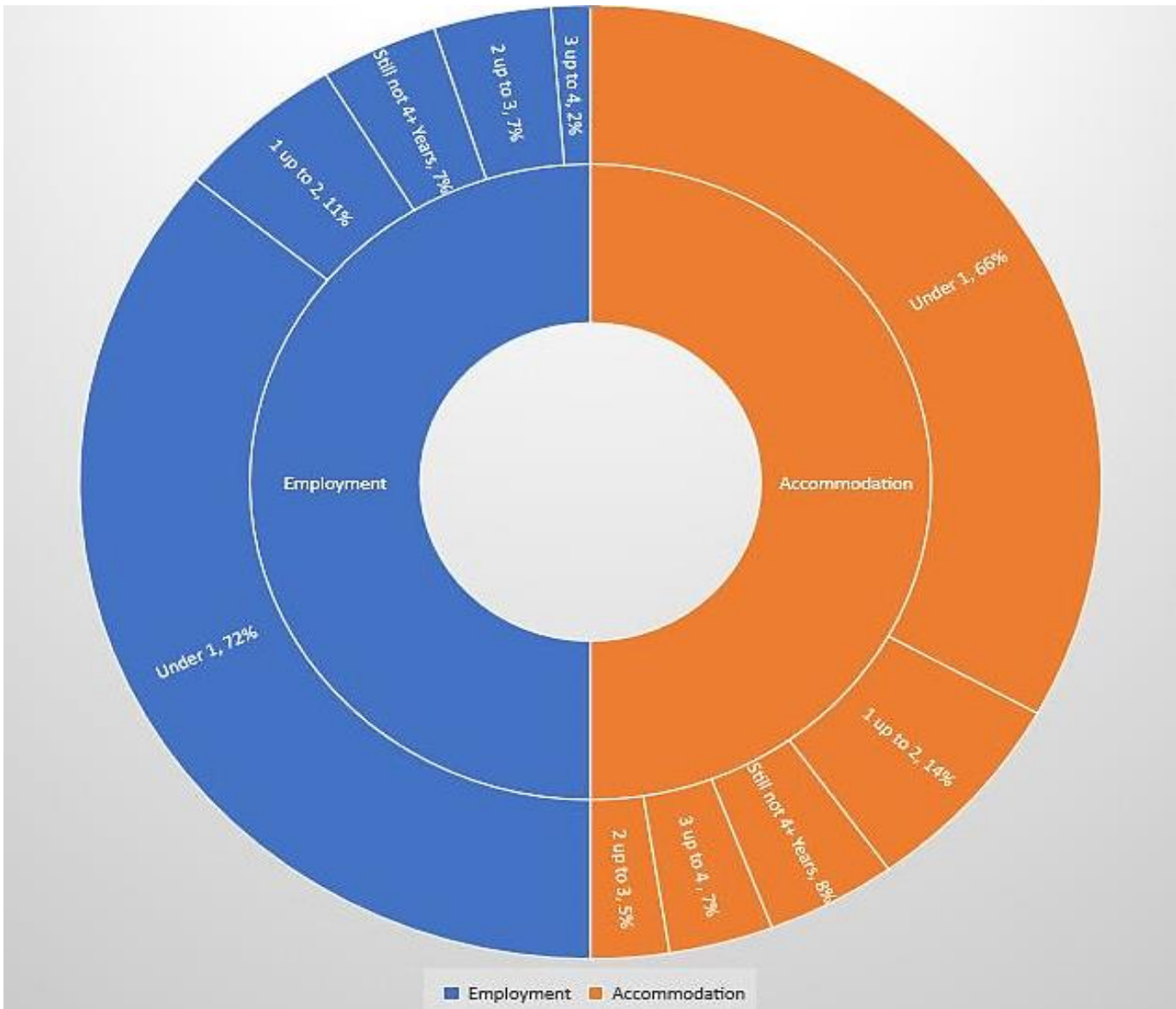


Figure 16: Time Taken to Find Meaningful Work and A Suitable Place to Live

Figure 16 above demonstrates that a significant proportion of the respondents succeeded in securing meaningful employment (72%) and accommodation (66%) under one year of discharge.

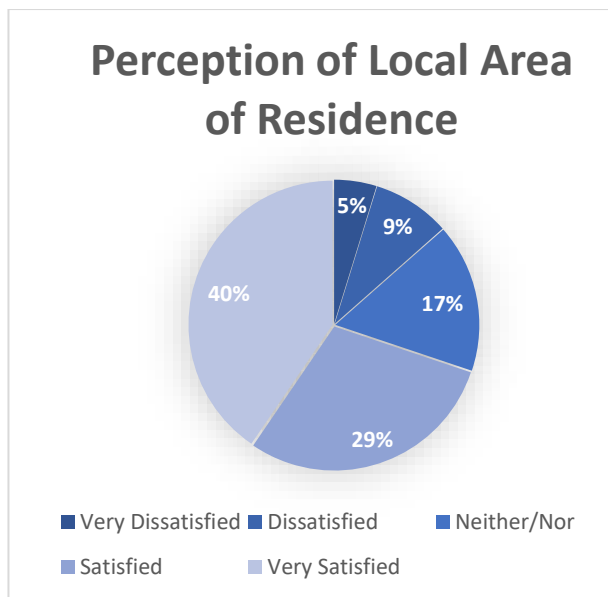


Figure 17: Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with Local Area

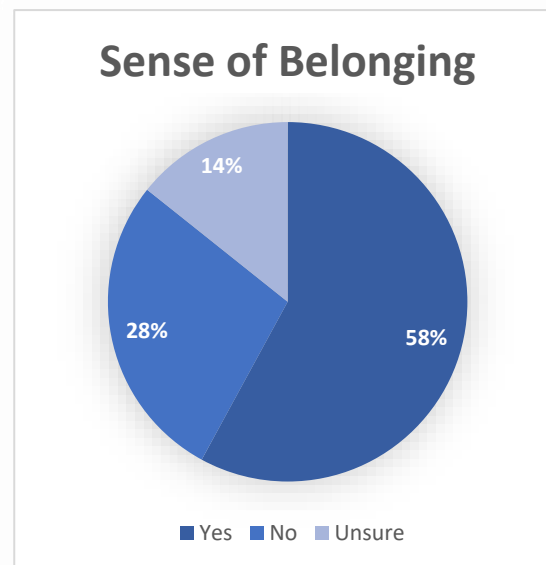


Figure 18: Sense of Belonging

Respondents reported great levels of satisfaction (40%) with the local area in which they reside, as can be seen in Figure 17 above. Respondents also indicated the need for additional support for facilities such as: mental health support, access to healthcare, dentist, housing, benefits, financial as well as training as education. Access to some of these were exacerbated due to Covid-19, however others reported difficulty in accessing facilities such as education and training due to lack of funding and.

Furthermore, Figure 18 demonstrates that they also reported a significant sense of belonging (58%) with the local community in which they live post discharge. However, 28% also reported that they did not feel part of the community in which they live after discharge from the Forces.

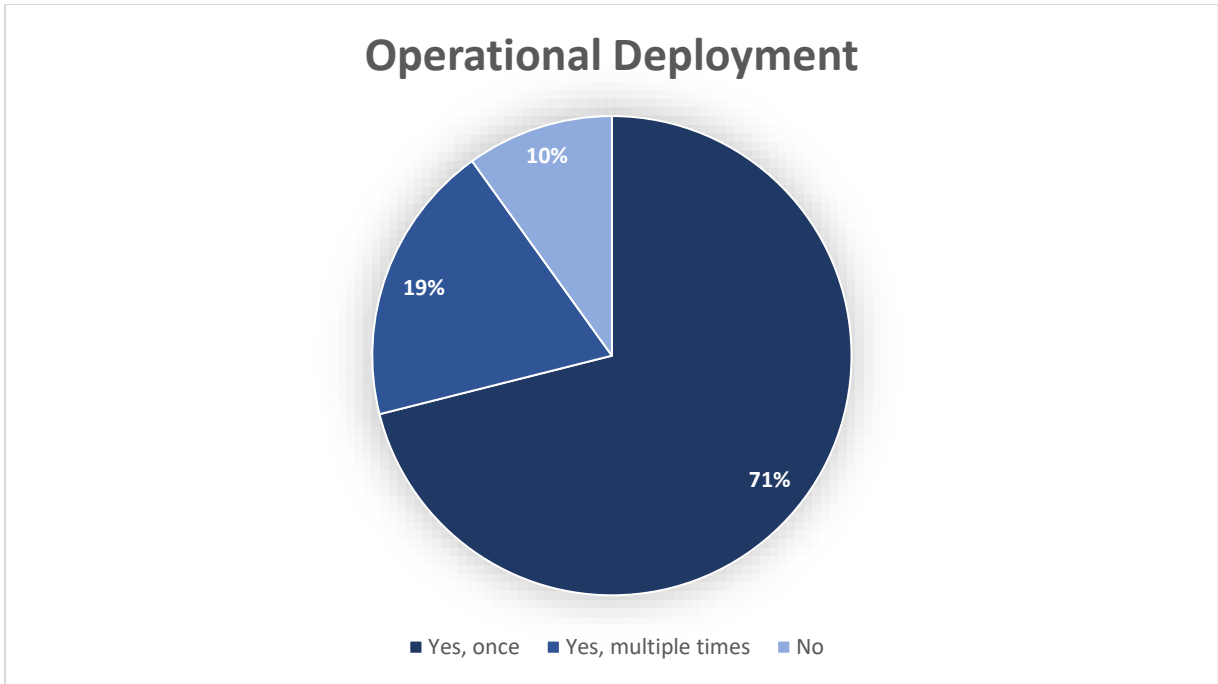
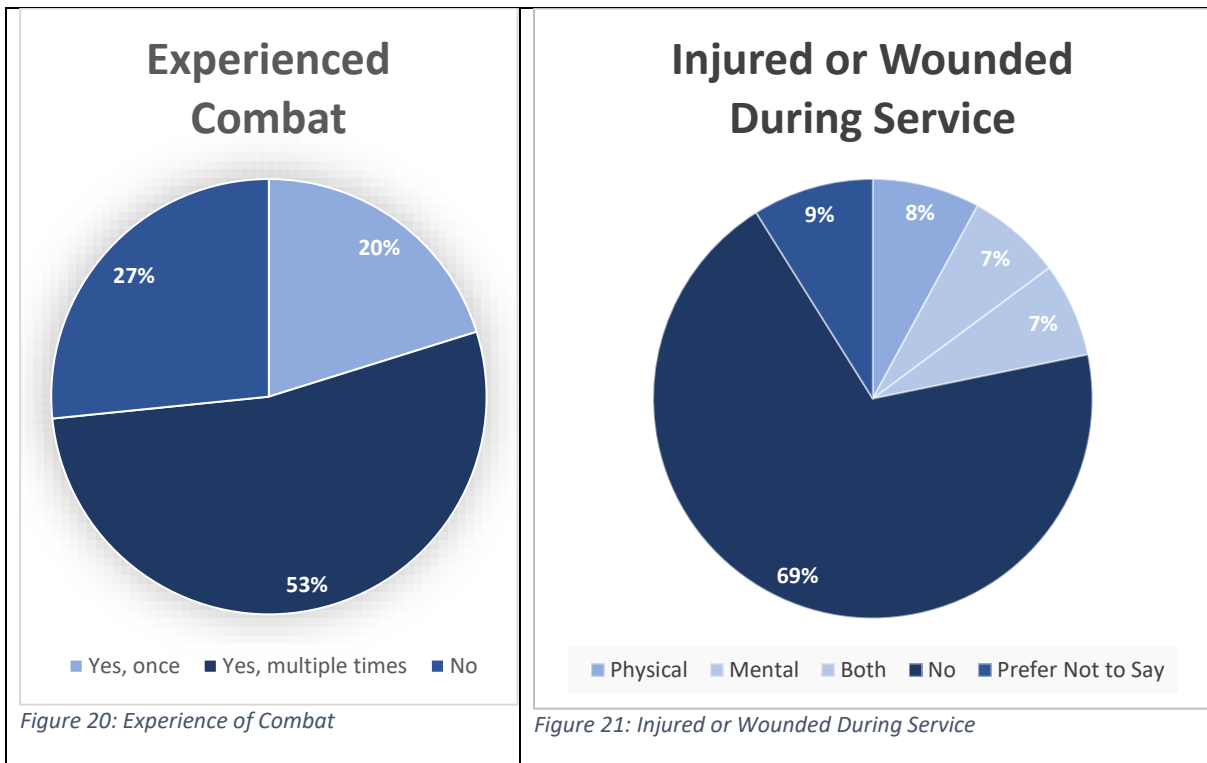


Figure 19: Operational Deployment

It is evident from Figure 19 above that 71% of respondents have completed an operational deployment at least once. While, 19% have completed several operational deployments.



While 53% of respondents indicated that they had experienced combat multiple times, 27% indicated they had never experienced combat.

A significant proportion of the respondents (69%) did not sustain any injury during service, however a small proportion indicated that they had experienced physical (8%) injury, mental (7%), while 7% indicated that they had sustained both mental and physical injury, as can be seen from Figure 21 above²⁶. Respondents further noted that the injuries they sustained made it difficult for them to acquire and/or remain in employment. Respondents that were medically discharged acknowledged the support they received from the Personnel Recovery unit but expressed great difficulty in transitioning to civilian life.

²⁶ Our survey remains open as we actively seek responses from those who identify as having a disability for a more representative sample.

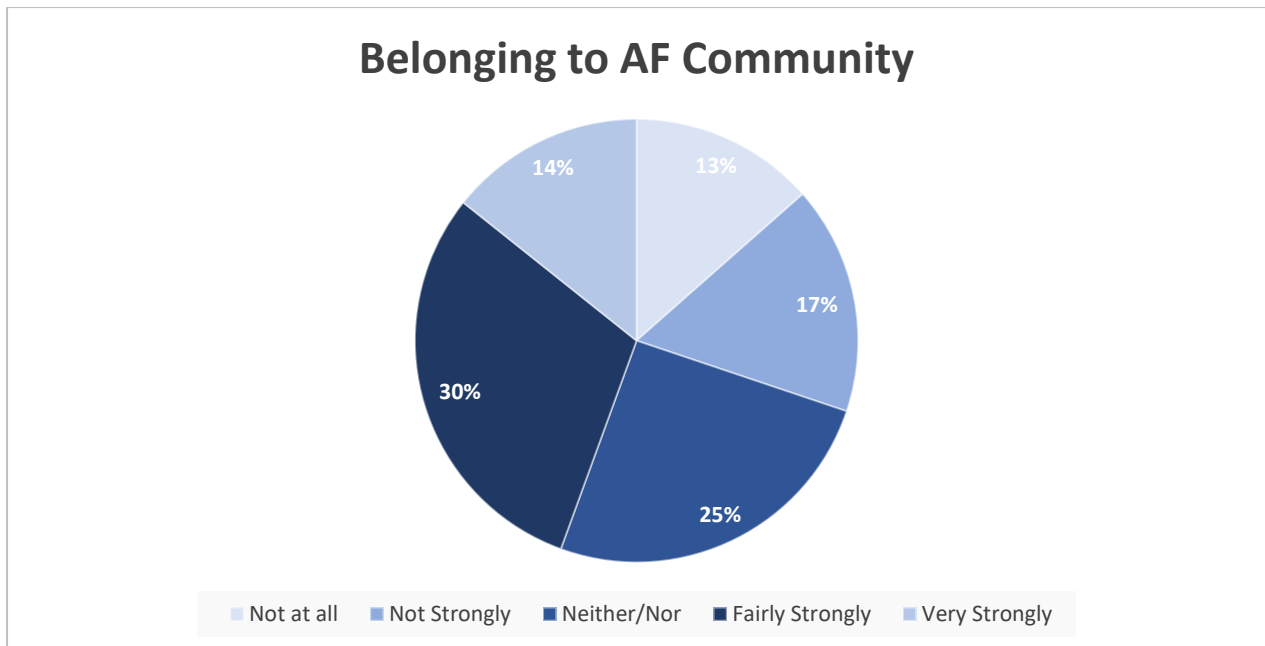


Figure 22: Sense of Belonging with AF Community

Figure 22 above indicates a varied sense of belonging with the AF community following discharge, with 30% expressing a fairly strong sense. For instance, one respondent stated: *"Anyone who feel part of the local community usually has family and friends in the area, this can be a huge deciding factor in where leavers decide to settle. I was brought up in my LA area, without doubt this was a huge factor when my wife and I finally decided to settle in one place. The support for the AF community is tremendous, you are truly welcomed in the area with people still proud to have friends and family who serve or have served."* Several other respondents also stated that there was great support for veterans in their local community. However, 25% expressing uncertainty, and 17% stating they did not feel a strong sense of belonging post discharge. For instance, a few respondents argued that they did not feel welcomes in the community due to their veteran status, while others argued that only other veterans could understand them. As expressed by a respondent: *"Only other service personnel will ever understand how I think and work."* The pandemic has also restricted opportunities for other veterans in fully integrating with their local community.

However, 68% of respondents expressed that they did not attend any serving military community activities, while 32% did. Those who did indicated that they

attended "Regimental Association meetings, breakfast clubs... various parades including activities in the local town hall... memorial golf."

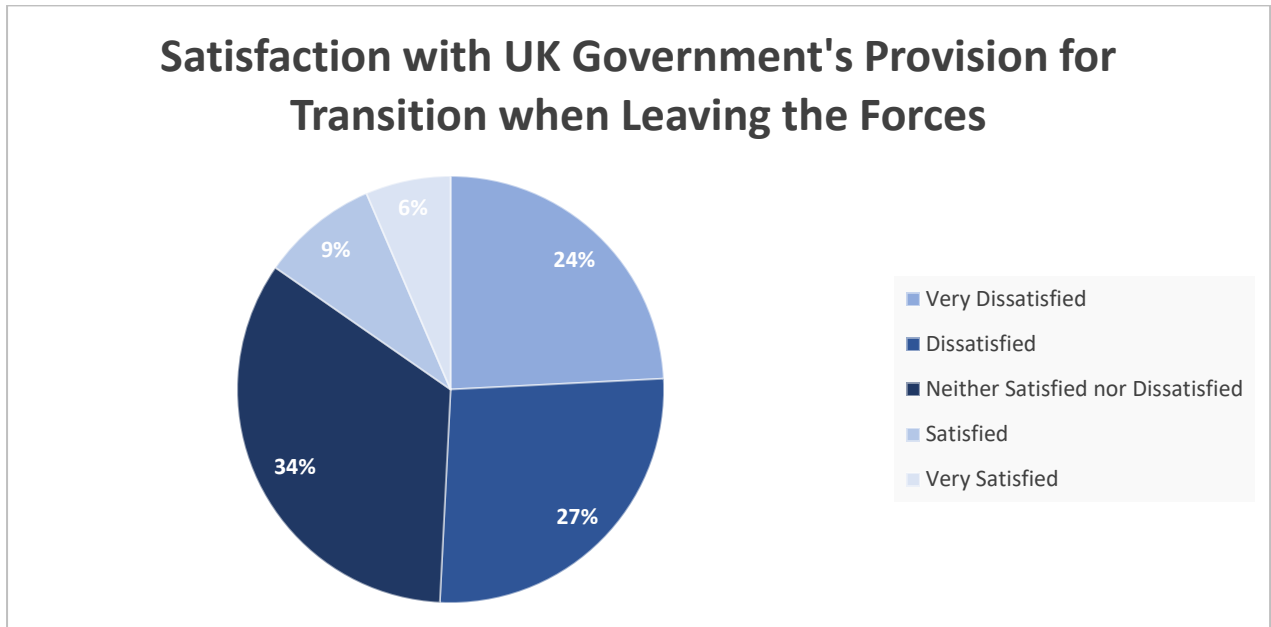


Figure 23: Satisfaction with UK Government

Figure 23 above indicates that a significant proportion of the respondents were uncertain (34%) with the Government's provision for transition/resettlement when leaving the Armed Forces. However, a great proportion were dissatisfied (27%) and very dissatisfied (24%). Satisfaction was only expressed by 15% of the respondents. Furthermore, it was expressed that there was a need to better inform service leavers on housing, welfare support, education and learning credits in Scotland. Respondents also stated that it was essential to align military skills and qualification with that of civilian skills as this impeded on their employment opportunities. CTP employment and resettlement training was deemed inadequate with a greater focus on England and less so on Scotland. Respondents noted a disconnect in the information from the Service Leavers guide and reported a need for greater support for resettlement not just for the service leaver, but also for the children, families and particularly spouses. Indeed, it was noted that partners should also be allowed access to MoD resettlement information to enable an informed transition. The additional of a veterans network during resettlement was deemed beneficial.

5.1.2 Conclusion

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

Lastly, a greater proportion of the respondents expressed that they felt either unsure or unprepared for transition to civilian life. These findings are based on limited data so far received, and it is emphasised that the findings cannot be applied to the potential wider Scottish veterans population at this point. Our survey remains open, and the findings will potentially change as we receive more responses from active personnel, families, and significant others (provisional MoDREC approval has been secured, and we await final approval to dispense our survey to active Tri-Service personnel, both those thinking of transition and those in the process of transition). Realising through interviews that employability was an unexplored area, we have chosen to develop a second questionnaire in partnership with Sue Bomphray (co-chair of the Veterans Employability Strategic Group).

5.2 Initial Qualitative Findings

This chapter builds on the quantitative data and explores the experiences and perceptions of key informants and stakeholders in various organisations to gain an understanding of the process of transition in Scotland. It examines emerging definitions of transition within the context of the Armed Forces. The focus of this chapter is on exploring what transition is from the perspective of the key stakeholders and not an examination of a specific individual. These are early findings which will grow and develop as we work through the analysis process and collect additional data.

5.2.1 Overview of interviews

A total of 14 key informants were interviewed:

Name of Organisation	Total Number
51 Brigade Army HQ	1
Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework	1
Association of Directors of Education in Scotland	1
City of Edinburgh Council	1
Rock2Recovery	1
Poppyscotland	1
Army Family Federation	1
Royal Air Force Family Federation	1
Naval Family Federation	1
Skills Development Scotland	1
NHS Veterans Care Pathway	1
Joint Force Alba	1
Scottish Veterans Commissioner	1
Walking With the Wounded	1

Table 1: Number of Participants in Initial Stakeholder Interviews

The key stakeholders were asked four main questions to gain and understanding about the process of transition in Scotland. Other additional questions were also asked to gather clarity from the responses received. The main questions included: how transition should happen; what is in place to match skills and experience with civilian opportunities; the enablers and inhibitors to current policies and provisions; and what transition would look like in an ideal world. Initial analysis of the interviews is presented below.

5.2.1.1 How should transition happen?

As previously discussed, the MoD perceives transition as a specific point (two years before leaving the Forces) at which the individual embarks on a formal resettlement process. Our initial analysis of the findings reveals that the timeframe for transition is varied, with some arguing this could range from a year, while others contesting the concept that individuals should think about transition from the day they join the forces. For instance, a key informant details the process of how an individual informs their intention to terminate their service and how this then triggers the formal resettlement process. However, the individual may not be able to take full advantage of the resettlement time as there will be pre-planned activities and training that require to be fulfilled, reducing resettlement to an activity 'when there's time':

"Most people have a year of planning... I mean by the time they sort of mentally go through the process and they log on to the we call the Joint Personnel Administration system, which is our administration software, so we log on to that and we select the note that I'm submitting my notice to terminate. So, when you do that, that starts the whole process... once they've started submitted that notice to terminate online, then that's when the whole process starts. But the clock's ticking. They press the button, the clock's ticking and there's loads of things that get in the way. There will be exercises and the training that is already planned in the programme where they'll be out in the field, they may not have any access to Wi-Fi to do anything now. There will be courses they've been sent on. So, there'll be all these things in the pipeline which they still have to attend, which is rightly so, you know, as you are still being paid by the MoD. But right now, I, I think the way it works right now is resettlement is still very much something that happens when there's time..."

They further explain that an individual can still have an overseas deployment in the last six months of their contract depending on the operational needs, which poses great challenges for the individual and their family. For instance, organising

relocation, childcare/schools, accommodation, and employment is 'very challenging':

... There are there are key aspects of resettlement that have to happen and should take priority. It gets even worse if they're abroad because if they're abroad, so you can still be deployed in your last six months in the JSP, there is a paragraph which says that you know, ideally you shouldn't be deployed, but if operational demands need it, then you can be deployed in your last six months. But also, for most people, they're not based where they're going to settle. So, they could be in Aldershot and they're going to say they're going to live and work in Scotland. This is a huge challenge. Now, I've been through it myself. It is so, so hard to house hunt and job hunt and school to find out about schools at a distance. And even if you are just a few hours away from that geographical location where you want to live, it's very challenging to like to work all those things are. And so, in the end, like me and my husband, both I think are competent people we didn't manage to work out where to live. But then we had to end up having to rent, which we didn't really anticipate when we first moved up to Scotland." (K11)

Another key informant explained that the governments emphasis that every service leaver should have 'a seamless transition'. They contested Lord Ashcroft's vision of resettlement from day one, and that historically there has been a greater emphasis on post-service employment. However, there is a need to consider the life skills that individuals acquire from the forces and how these can be further developed through addressing other areas such as adequate support with education, housing, employment, and financial literacy:

"I remember quite early in my time on the topic using the word seamless transition...the aim of government and every service leaver to achieve a seamless transition... People starting the resettlement journey the moment they walked through the door, that is unrealistic because the military does not have time to think that far ahead, because this guy's mission is to defend the nation and be it one day a year, two days a year, there was focus given to life skills, you know that housing and employment, financial literacy and even let's face it, because, you know, for some, for some traits in the military, the recruitment criteria is quite low at that, particularly thinking about the artillery and the like. So, giving people the opportunity to improve their basic life skills could perhaps go some way towards law about Ashcroft's vision without impacting too severely on the military mission, which is to obviously defend. Defend the nation with regards to transition today and it's better than what it was and still too focussed on employment and it needs to look at the other areas I've touched on..." (K16)

5.2.1.2 How are skills and experiences matched with civilian opportunities?

There are several initiatives in place throughout the UK to allow service leavers to apply their skills and experiences in gaining civilian employment. Stakeholders were asked about the opportunities in Scotland for service leavers. One key informant explained how their organisation conducted training sessions with the serving military, while also informing younger recruits about self-development by improving their skills in language/communication, demonstrating their own skills through 'star model etc.':

"... I suppose it's a two-pronged approach to the movement in the sense that I've been delivering [training] sessions up there [North] and this is primarily for the Army, because, as you know, probably the younger leavers are probably the ones who need more support in order to come in and transition. We've been doing sessions up there, personal resilience days with the serving military... We've been talking about future skills, skills, Industry 4.0, getting them to start thinking about using the language skills and also introducing them to the star model and how we can use examples using the star model things you've done and to demonstrate the skills that they're using and are displaying. And that can be from, you know, the most junior of soldier right up to the most senior soldier." (K18)

They further explained that the skills and education landscape is different in Scotland when compared to England, and they suggested that having a guidance practitioner would make their transition experience a more seamless process:

"... However, in Scotland it's [transition journey] slightly different. And because we have a national skills agency and we have a lifelong learning service, if you like, and that the offer is always there for anyone to come and see us at any time. But specifically, across the north region, if you like, that is an additional offer of career guidance prior to seeking engagement... our view was, that if that person had the chance to speak to a guidance practitioner prior to attending CTP, they're happy about the fact that they have a bit of an understanding about where they want to go themselves... So, what we have found is that people have come to us to speak to us, do tend to come back to us. But that's okay because we can complement the CTP offer." (K18)

As supported by the literature review, key concerns for transitioning military personnel were accommodation, education, and employment. The two quote below although long and detailed provides a good insight into the key struggles faced by one particular individual during and post transition:

“But when I think back to my transition, there were two things that concerned me. And the reason that concerned me was because I'd stayed for 24 years. And during those 24 years, the two things that concerned me had been done for me by and large, in that I had a house and had a job. And when I was coming down, those were the two priorities for me that I needed to address. I'd never been in the position of home ownership, and that was because I was either overseas or in the affluent south where I just couldn't afford to buy a cottage. So, it was about getting on the housing ladder... the other thing I probably touch is financial awareness. Servicemen and women are great for living in the moment and preparing for tomorrow's is not always to the forefront of their minds... And I do think the services could do more around financial literacy and to help people access that what they're entitled to, so manage their money more, you know...” (K16)

“The other thing that just came into my head is the transferable skills and the importance of qualification that's being civilianised. You know if I look at myself as an example. I probably left the Air Force with very few civilian qualifications that would improve my job prospects, and that's not because I didn't have experience, but I didn't have qualifications. And quite often when you're looking at a job advertisement, it talks about a minimum a minimum education requirement. Well, I, I would beat the bar like many service leavers from even applying because I have not got that level of qualifications... So, I'm going back to the seamless transition. Having that sweep of civilian qualifications are going to improve your employment prospects and over the years, it's been spoken about regularly. And I do think there's some work going on in that area now. But I've yet to see the outcomes of this.” (K16)

5.2.1.3 *What are the mechanisms by which these decisions are enabled/hindered by the current policies and provisions?*

In interviews where there were discussions around current policies and provision, participants identified decision that had enabled or hindered specific outcomes.

“The reality is Scotland is a fraction of the size of the UK, so you can only get ahead so much before you become irrelevant, because people need to focus on the mass... The Ministry of Defence recognises devolution and the need to be fair to the different aspects of the devolution so that service leavers are given the full and package of information... I remember when they [Defence Transition Service] were just a wee idea, I went to a meeting in London, and they said it's going to be 12 of these people. They're going to cover the whole of the United Kingdom except Scotland... we have a defence transition service in Scotland that actually covers Scotland and Northern Ireland. It's made up of a manager, a coordinator, another administrator... these people have been established to support the most vulnerable service leavers through transition... the intention is right but handicapped by resource.” (K16)

In terms of the experiences of families, all participants identified the needs of the family and perceived them as core to the whole transition process. The emergence of this theme encouraged us to pursue in-depth interviews and focus groups with families to understand their experiences of the transition process in Phase 2:

“...I would go back to acknowledge that it's important that families are seeing it seen as being part of the resettlement because they make a commitment and through following and supporting that, it's only right that the MoD should acknowledge that commitment to helping them as well. And historically, I would say spouses and partners and family members have often been forgotten about.”
(K16)

Across all the interviews the concept of partnership working in Scotland is very strong. With evidence of Local Authorities, the NHS, and the Armed Forces working in partnership to develop and maintain services. Indeed, this specific partnership model does appear to stand out from practices in other parts of the UK:

... I think everybody across Scotland is great. But actually, when you look at what we offer in Scotland to the armed forces communities as a partnership, I think we are streets ahead of other parts of the UK and probably other parts of the world as well in the sense of what else could you go for? You could have the government, its agencies, the third sector, the umbrella organisation, a commissioner all-round the table, all want to make things right and make things better for the armed forces community. And but everyone knows each other. I think we're small enough that we knew each other big enough to actually have a bit of influence. And that's fine as well. You know, I mean, so, yeah, it's something that I just love to see the partnership work and take place. And... I think no body is precious once you are there, then I think once people realise that we're all trying to achieve the same thing, I don't think there's any issues around who does it, and who does what.”
(K18)

Some of the interviews relation to veteran employability were quite vague and there was some discussion about apprenticeship models for this group. This particular theme prompted the development of Survey 2, to explore in more detail the number and range of veterans employed in companies in Scotland who have been awarded Gold Covenant status:

“I think there's opportunity, and I think especially for the younger self, the services of the younger service. There's opportunity, there's opportunity through learning,

through apprenticeship schemes, through the various offers around from not just, you know, like government or agency offers. There's the support available from the likes of Poppyscotland. There's residential stuff that's grants to this. There's quite an attractive package of finance, if you like, to be able to bring into Scotland. And I think if you're looking at the Scottish model, I think we are quite progressive future thinking in terms of future labour market, the skills for the future, the skills for those teams working with employers to develop you know, the employers learning, I think, for opportunity and stability.” (KI6)

Understanding the experience of health and wellbeing for veterans and their family was also an emerging theme. Below a key informant outlines the specialist trauma centre that has been developed in Scotland to support veterans mental health and wellbeing:

“... it was all about creating a specialist trauma centre... because of the number of veterans who were using the centre [specialist recovery centre in a hospital] and they'd often taken a very, very long time to find the way back or to be back... to find a way to get help and for PTSD [support]... [because they] had been referred to the wrong place... You can give them lots of other interventions that you really didn't need that weren't that helpful... We want veterans first point because that means something in the military, the first point... And it was all about coordination, accessibility and credibility... more tolerant... We were employing people with lived experience of mental health problems to work with other people who had similar experiences and then using their story as part of working with the people.” (KI11)

5.2.1.4 *What would transition look like in an ideal world?*

Our final question in all interviews was to give the participants an opportunity for some blue sky thinking. Here we wanted to capture what the ideal transition experience might be. We also used this question as a means of identifying gaps from the perspectives of the key stakeholders. The quote below introduces the concepts of decompression and deinstitutionalisation as key aspects of the transition process:

“...decompression is part of transition... there was a reservist who did some work with us. Within 24 hours of being involved in a street fight in Afghanistan, he was back on the streets of Nottingham... And the importance as part of this transition, the decompression piece, is important. And, you know, I remember I met somebody a few years ago and he spoke about deinstitutionalisation. It just doesn't happen today, because when you join something like the military and you serve for the

length of time that some people do, you do become a bit institutionalised, of course... if we can do more decompression through the transition point, then that would hopefully help people get better prepared, but definitely because it's not like I don't think three months is even sufficient before you're thinking of leaving to just decompress or to think of like if you walk out of that gate, that's the end of your career. That's your identity, as you know, being in the armed forces just gone. It doesn't work that quickly. It takes time. And you need to be involved in activities that makes you feel part of the civilian world.” (K16)

Recognition of personal skills and abilities was cited by a key informant as an important aspect of a smooth transition, as it increases awareness of post-service employment expectation:

“... I think everyone would have their own individual transition at work for them. So, I think it's a safe transition journey that seamless that has the right interventions at the right time. It starts to be one of joining the military and that's encouraged by the military. So, you know, instead of putting their heads in the sand, everyone's going to leave everybody joining the military is going to leave the military. And I think preparing for that from day one of entering the military is a good thing. And that actually is an attention, because people will see that it is not always greener on the other side... But I think a transition is seamless against the person, the family to where they want to be and to be clear they want a happy working.” (K18)

5.3 Conclusion

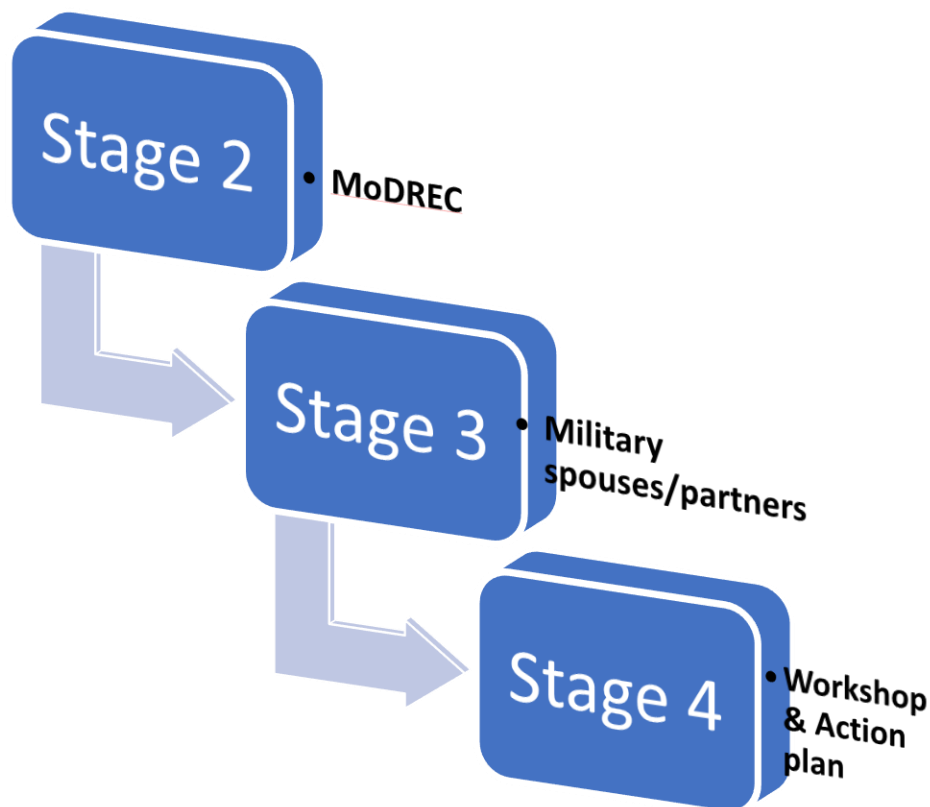
This section only provides a flavour of the current data available but is intended to demonstrate how we use each phase of the study to build the next. All the key themes identified above will continue to be part of our questions and ongoing analysis. As interviews are completed a more in-depth perspective of these themes will emerge from various stakeholders.

6 Concluding Comments and Next Steps

As highlighted earlier, this study is being undertaken over a two-year period to enable us to explore the experiences of Service leavers at various stages in the transition process. To date the participants have been drawn from two distinct groups: key community stakeholders (interviews) and veterans (online survey, those who have already left the Armed Forces having left within the last 10 years). This report has presented the emerging key findings from Phase 1, which has included both interviews and survey data.

This report presents the interim findings of an ongoing project which has the potential to change as further datasets are collected and analysed. Our initial responses to the survey yielded a higher proportion of White Scottish males. In the interest of diversity, and on the advice of our Advisory Board, we have kept the survey active and opened it up to a higher proportion of female veterans, LGBT, ethnic minorities, and those with injuries. Although not reported here, as a consequence of this action we already have an additional 20 female respondents. But the survey remains live to address the diversity of our sample.

6.1 Next Steps



Having established the key foundations to the study year two builds on the literature review, the surveys, and qualitative in-depth interviews. In the next three stages we will:

- Continue to conduct in-depth interviews with up to 30 veterans living in Scotland. Survey 1 has identified veterans living in all 27 councils who have agreed to be interviewed and providing a cross sectional sample group.
- Review in interviews experiences of CTP and those who have chosen not to engage in this process.
- On receipt of MoDREC approval we will disseminate the survey to the Tri services in Scotland to those considering transition in the next two years or those who are currently in the process of transition.
- Follow up the survey with in-depth interviews- with serving personnel (110 across the Tri services if possible).
- Review the impact of JSP100 on the transition process by interviewing education and transition officers across the Tri-services. On receipt of MoDREC approval we will disseminate the survey to those not just in

Scotland but those transitioning in Scotland but also those planning to settle in Scotland.

- Take into account the planned changes for the Army in Scotland.
- Conduct interviews or focus group discussions with military spouses and partners (20 across the Tri services if possible) to elicit their plans for transition or experience of the transition process and the impact on family.
- Comparative analysis of expected outcomes (organisational beneficiaries, service providers with lived experience of service leavers and their families).
- Dissemination of findings at conferences and through articles in peer reviewed journals. Engage with media students to develop short films to disseminate findings on social media sites.
- Conduct three appreciative inquiry workshops with study participants to feedback on findings and prioritise outcomes into an action plan.
- Continue to work with the Advisory Board to seek support and feedback on the study developments and outcomes.
- On receipt of MODREC approval we will in tandem with Survey 1 conduct in-depth interviews with key military stakeholders, see Figure 24 below:

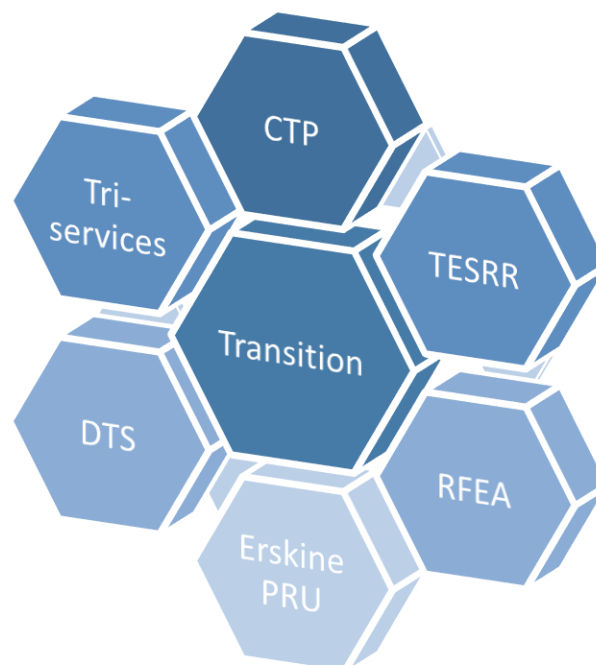


Figure 24: Stage 3 Military Stakeholders

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