




# Snapshot


## Criminal Justice System Bullets


The attached is a summary of the Criminal Justice System Snapshot, accessible on the Veterans & Families Research Hub [<https://www.vfrhub.com/>]. Information correct as at 14.11.18.

 The 'Review of Former Members of the Armed Forces and the Criminal Justice System' (the Phillips Review) in 2014 explored the needs of veterans in the CJS. Key recommendations of the Phillips Review included the need for veteran-specific programmes, transitional support at the end of a prison sentence to reduce recidivism and help for offenders' families. Figures from 2011 estimate that 3.5% of the prison population are ex-Service personnel, but this number remains highly contested, due to the lack of historically recorded statistical information. Veterans form the highest occupational group in prison.

 Findings from the Phillips Review estimated that 77% of ex-Servicemen in prison served in the Army, 15% in the Royal Navy and 8% in the Royal Air Force. 51% of ex-Servicemen in prison are over the age of 45 years and 29% over the age of 55, which compares to 9% of the general prison population being aged 50 years or over, suggesting that many ex-Servicemen in prison have offended a considerable time after their date of discharge. The majority of ex-Servicemen in the CJS do not leave service early or after failing basic training, but rather having served a considerable period, on average, six and a half years.

 The Phillips Review highlighted the need to properly identify the reasons for ex-Service personnel ending up in the CJS and to identify areas where support is needed. Since January 2015, every prisoner going through the custody process should be asked if they have ever served in Her Majesty's Armed Forces. Ex-Service people may not want to identify themselves as being involved in the CJS, due to the stigma of shame or embarrassment, fear of retribution as a cohort able to defend themselves or not wishing to associate their military career with having a criminal record.

 In Wales, veterans are identified as a priority group within the All Wales Criminal Justice Board's Reducing Reoffending Strategy. The Welsh government has provided a guide to the formal identification and verification process. The Scottish Armed Forces and Veterans Champion Scheme has developed a referral service where every individual presenting at a police station in Scotland is asked if they are a veteran and if it is appropriate, they are referred for support and signposting.

 Ex-Service personnel may be viewed as high risk due to their backgrounds. There are a number of pre-service indicators that make personnel more vulnerable to follow or continue on an anti-social behaviour trajectory: those who had seen or had trauma or violence at some point in their lives, periods in local authority care, with drug or alcohol issues prior to enlisting. Crime is commonly connected with those who have witnessed or have family deprivation, low educational attainment, homelessness and poor health. There are also those who experience difficulties arising

in military service. The Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report suggests that service in the Armed Forces is believed to be a preventative factor for some away from the CJS. These problems may or may not have been the reason for discharge.

- Veterans' tendencies towards a lack of willingness to share outward emotional distress and a desire to protect others and demonstrate extreme self-reliance, adds to the difficulty of help seeking and a lack of identification. Ex-Service personnel tend to be more successful in helping fellow servicemen who get into difficulties than those who have never had experience of the Forces, reinforcing the idea that 'a veteran responds better to a veteran'.

- Liaison and Diversion programmes operate in many custody suites at the point of arrest, to identify and assess offenders who have vulnerabilities. In April 2015 to 2016, 2.4% of clients going through Liaison and Diversion services were ex-Service personnel. In line with other research, violent offences were the most prevalent amongst veterans. Police custody creates an opportunity for first point of contact intervention by an appropriate service provider. Project Nova is the biggest provider of point of arrest, veteran-specific support. Project Nova currently operates across 19 counties in the UK.

- The Military Corrective Training Centre (MCTC) is a facility to detain Service personnel and civilians subject to military regulations, who have been sentenced to any period of custody between 14 days and two years. There are three categories of detainees: those who are to remain in the Services at the end of their detention, those who are to be discharged after serving their sentence and are released as civilians and those held in military custody, either awaiting the outcome of an investigation or awaiting placement at a prison or Young Offenders Institution.

- Veterans in Custody Support Officers (VICSOs) aim to identify offenders in a custodial setting who have served in the Armed Forces, and to offer referrals to community ex-Service organisations for resettlement assistance. VICSOs act as a liaison between Offender Supervisors and the community ex-Service organisations. However, provision is not universal across the prison estate, is not mandatory and has no designated funding.

- Veterans in the CJS remain a significant minority of ex-Service personnel who have had difficulties following transition out of the Armed Forces. It will be some time before any developments based on the Phillips Review recommendations for directed support will have been fully implemented. The expansion of services remains inconsistent and there is some way to go before co-ordination is achieved. Some support, particularly around mental health provision, will require a full national strategy. There is significant gain to be had by greater collaboration between public sector support, including probation and health services, and the Armed Forces charities.