

Snapshot

Education and Training

Snapshot *Noun* [c] (UNDERSTANDING)

A piece of information or short description that gives an understanding of a situation at a particular time

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A plain language summary of research and evidence relating to the UK Armed Forces and veteran community

Produced by the FiMT Research Centre



About Snapshots

Snapshots are designed to aid understanding of the complex issues at play in relation to the Armed Forces, and to support decision-making processes by bridging the gaps between academic research, government and charitable policy, Service provision and public opinion. Snapshots are aimed primarily at those working in policy-making and Service provision roles for the Armed Forces, and are also useful to those seeking facts, figures and informed comment to empower a more objective discussion among the wider population, including the Armed Forces community and the media. The purpose of Snapshots is to review and interpret research and policy and to set out concise, plain language summaries to facilitate understanding and perception. Hyperlinks are provided to relevant sources of information, including academic research and organisation websites. Hover over hyperlinks to see reference information for each source and click to access them.

The [Forces in Mind Trust Research Centre](#) will produce a range of Snapshots covering many of the main themes and topics relating to the Armed Forces and veteran community. Due to the constant process of research and policy changes, Snapshots will be updated regularly in order to maintain their relevance. They will be hosted on the [Veterans & Families Research Hub](#). Contributions and comments are welcome via the [Veterans & Families Research Hub forum](#).

Disclaimer

Whilst Snapshots are produced using recognised research processes, they are written for a lay audience. They are a collation and summary of available academic and quality grey literature (unpublished or non-commercial literature), to provide an overview of information on a particular theme or topic. Snapshots are written to inform and to disseminate a large body of literature in an accessible way to as wide an audience as possible. They are not intended to be, and should not be regarded as, rigorous searches or systematic reviews.

About the authors of this Snapshot

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About the Forces in Mind Trust Research Centre

The [Forces in Mind Trust Research Centre](#) was established in October 2017 within [The Veterans & Families Institute for Military Social Research](#) (VFI) at Anglia Ruskin University. The Centre curates the [Veterans & Families Research Hub](#), which provides advice and guidance to stakeholders and produces targeted research and related outputs. The Centre is funded by the [Forces in Mind Trust](#), which commissions research to contribute to a solid evidence base from which to inform, influence and underpin policy making and service delivery.

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Introduction and definitions

This Snapshot summarises issues relating to literature surrounding the education of Serving personnel and veterans. The Snapshot sets out policy responses and current structures of support, presenting research evidence where available. The following terms may be useful:

- **‘Resettlement’** describes the processes and procedures by which one leaves the Armed Forces, and the formal support provided. It starts from the notification of/election to discharge and routinely continues for two years after discharge.
- The term **‘transition’** is used to describe the period of (re)integration into civilian life from the Armed Forces. For the purposes of this report, it is taken to start with the point in-Service at which personnel start active consideration and preparation for leaving the Armed Forces, and continues for varied periods of time depending on personal circumstances.
- The terms **veteran** and **ex-Service personnel** are used interchangeably; the Ministry of Defence’s 2014 policy definition of a ‘veteran’ is an individual who has “served for at least a day in HM Armed Forces, whether as a Regular or a Reservist.” This includes Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Merchant Navy personnel who have served in support of the Armed Forces.

Methods

A review was undertaken of the available UK evidence relating to Serving and veteran education and training, using standard reviewing techniques such as searching electronic databases, hand searching of references from relevant articles and reports and a review of websites from government and relevant organisations. Due to the use of hyperlinks in this report, the findings are restricted to online availability only. Discussion and comment on education issues and considerations for Serving personnel and veterans can be found in a range of reviews and reports. The [Veterans & Families Research Hub](#) has been an invaluable source of relevant literature.

The [Veterans’ Transition Review](#) offers a comprehensive overview of discussion on the educational requirements and culture within the Armed Forces and has been used widely in the findings for this Snapshot.

In [their report](#), the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts (CPA) have highlighted the shortfall in the critical skills gap in Regular Service personnel, particularly in the areas of pilot trades, intelligence analysis and engineering. Their recommendations include the development and implementation of a workforce strategy to close existing skill gaps, in order to retain existing Serving personnel and to enable them to carry out their work safely and effectively. Further, retraining is needed to update proficiencies and skillsets, in order to support personnel in their career progression beyond life in the Armed Forces.

Educational and training opportunities by Service

The British Army

The [opportunities to study](#) for job-related apprenticeships and civilian, academic qualifications are provided on the [Army website](#). The website suggests that 98% of all Army recruits finish with qualifications they can build on during and after their Service career. Learning skills are delivered through Army Education Centres and Learning Centres across the UK. Sessions are delivered by Basic Skills Tutors, volunteers and mentors.

[The Army is the largest apprenticeship provider in the UK](#) and offers academic support to Serving personnel and learning credits ([where eligible](#)) to veterans. The criteria for learning credits is covered in further detail under 'Sources of Funding' on page 5. These educational and vocational opportunities provide soldiers with transferable skills or qualifications (e.g. NVQs) both in-Service and to enhance their prospects for subsequent civilian employment as a veteran.

[Research data suggests](#) that most soldiers will have minimal formal qualifications when joining the military, and currently, no specific GCSE qualifications are required to meet the Army's criteria. However, those with A-level qualifications can join the Army through the Officer programme and will hold Officer Cadet rank during training, rising to Second Lieutenant (seven ranks above Private) on completion of their Officer training. Soldiers can progress through the ranks to the same levels, or beyond those who have Officer entry. The [Army Skills Offer](#) links every job in the Army with the opportunity to gain qualifications, including undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, technical qualifications or instructor level status.

Apprenticeships are available in several areas: public services and health, engineering, telecommunications, animal care, IT, logistics, construction and business administration. There are three apprenticeship levels: Level 2, which is a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 2, (equivalent to five good GCSE passes); Level 3, which is an advanced apprenticeship for those in technical trades, earning an NVQ Level 3 (equivalent to two A-level passes) and Level 4, which is a higher level apprenticeship (Diploma in Intelligence Operations). In terms of post Service, [the Army](#) state that *'you'll be working towards a qualification that will also be valued by employers outside of the Army'*.

Royal Air Force

RAF initial training lasts for between 10 and 24 weeks. RAF personnel then begin specialist training, the duration and location will depend on the job. Technical skills and on-the-job experience is offered and will form a part of an advanced apprenticeship or other qualifications. Many of the trades offer the chance to gain a civilian recognised qualification.

The RAF promotes lifelong learning, supported through the [Standard Learning Credit Scheme](#) and [Enhanced Learning Credit Scheme](#), available to all of the Services, the details of which are covered in this Snapshot under 'Sources of Funding' (page 5).

RAF accreditation provides opportunities to gain nationally recognised civilian qualifications through education, training and experience. Accreditation-based qualifications may require further study to complete a more advanced qualification. Learning credits may be used to support course fees.

Royal Navy

The [Learning and Development Organisation](#) (LDO) enables Naval Service personnel to access learning, development and resettlement support. This is available when shoreside or at sea. The LDO is split into shoreside and operational support. Shoreside support is provided through a network of Learning and Development Hubs across the UK. Operational support for deployed personnel is provided through the LDO (Operations) team. Free tuition, support and examinations are available for the take-up of GCSEs and A-levels. Personnel have access to trained coaches.

Whilst at sea, functional skills, GCSEs and A-level exams can be taken, with Service instructors providing tuition and support. In terms of transferable skills, Coaching workshops, to enhance communication skills and Learning and Development Interview support with a trained coach, are also available. Naval personnel are entitled to study a foreign language. Ships' libraries are available and personnel can be paid extra to teach others whilst on deployment.

Shoreside, Naval personnel, as do all three Services, have access to fully funded University short courses, functional skills and A-levels at no cost. The same access to learning and development opportunities are available as those during deployment. There is also access to support and assessment for specific learning difficulties (SpLD). Resettlement advice and guidance is also available for Serving personnel and Royal Navy veterans, to support the transition to civilian life.

[Royal Navy apprenticeships](#) were judged by Ofsted to be 'outstanding'. The Royal Navy is ranked as a 'Top 100 Apprenticeship Employer' with one of the highest completion rates in the UK. More than 20 apprenticeships are available, combine on-the-job training with study and usually take 12-18 months. The course is a mix of theory and work-based learning, with interviews and practical assessments, split approximately 20% learning and 80% working.

There are three main schemes: (1) Rating roles (Intermediate Apprenticeships): personnel are automatically enrolled in an Intermediate Apprenticeship, which is learning on-the job, whilst earning a wage (£15,364 during basic training, rising to £19,205 after completing 26 weeks training, as at 2018). (2) Accelerated Apprenticeships (Fast Track) are for those interested in an engineering career, who have gained a level 3 Diploma or A-levels in Maths or Physics. Personnel will start at a rating as a Leading Hand, which is two ranks higher than most Engineering Technicians and with a higher earnings level from the outset (£31,000 as at 2018). (3) The Undergraduate Apprenticeship Scheme (UGAS) is exclusively for the Submarine Service. Personnel join as a Leading Hand and are fast tracked to Petty Officer. Pay rates are up to £45,000, with a £5,000 bonus for qualifying as a Submariner (as at 2018). Staff will study for a BEng (Hons) in Electronic or Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering.

The Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Learning Culture

The MOD's training and education policy is based around three overlapping areas of Career Management, Professional Development and Personal Development, which together are known as 'the Learning Culture' (see [Veterans' Transition Review](#)). Professional Development is the training and education required to undertake a military role. This is delivered through courses with defined outputs by accredited service providers or online training. Individual service personnel may be required to undertake literacy or numeracy courses to raise their levels of education in preparation with the

course content. Within the Armed Forces, success in-Service can be measured by an upward trajectory based on rank, which is also an indicator of career advancement and salary improvement.

The terms 'training' and 'education' are often used interchangeably in MOD documents, such as [JSP822](#), Defence Direction and Guidance for Training and Education. JSP822 directs and guides Defence training to ensure it is appropriate, efficient, effective and safe. The Defence Systems Approach to Training (DSAT) in JSP822 refers to any training, education, learning or development, both individual and collective across the 'Whole Force'. The 'Whole Force' incorporates both Regular and Reserve personnel, MOD civil servants, civilians and civilian contractors.

The [Defence Awarding Organisation](#) (DAO) was established in April 2008 following a change in government policy. This allowed certain employers, including Defence, to form their own awarding organisations, in line with the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation's (Ofqual) national regulatory requirements. The DAO develops and provides nationally recognised qualifications for the defence community. All qualifications are on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) and range from Levels 1-7. The quality of qualifications is maintained through a robust quality assurance system. Qualifications are mapped to Defence Systems Approach to Training (DSAT) compliant courses. DAO fully supports recognition of prior learning (RPL). This is a method of assessment that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning.

[Entry level criteria to join the Armed Forces](#)

In terms of literacy and numeracy, [the minimum entry requirement](#) into the Armed Forces is Entry Level 2 (Key Stage 2 for primary school pupils), which is the equivalent standard of a 7-8 year-old in literacy and numeracy. [Research in 2012](#), used in the Veterans' Transition Review to demonstrate recruitment intake, showed that of those recruited to the Army, 3.5% were rated at Entry Level 2 for literacy and 39% had a literacy level at Entry Level 3, that of an 11 year-old. All Royal Navy and RAF recruits were found to be above Entry 3 level. The low levels of attainment in the Army candidates' levels of literacy and numeracy can be seen to reflect the demographic background of candidates at recruitment phase. Educational attainment is only one of a number of assessments taken into consideration, others include physical fitness, attitude and commitment.

As Serving personnel progress through their careers, they are required to reach Level 1 and Level 2 (GCSE equivalent) in the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) in literacy and numeracy. The target is for all personnel to attain at least Level 1 (GCSE Grade D–G or equivalent) literacy and numeracy standards within three years of joining. Those seeking promotion to the rank of Corporal or equivalent must hold Literacy and Numeracy qualifications at Level 1, as a minimum. For promotion to Sergeant or equivalent, the minimum requirement is Level 2 (GCSE Grades A*–C).

Candidates for recruitment whose literacy or numeracy skills are below the required standard may be deferred or directed to a local Further Education college or other education centre until their skills have improved, and they can then reapply. For recruits who are accepted but need assistance in reaching Level 1, a programme of support will be put in place during their training phase. This support is now largely delivered through the apprenticeship programmes conducted within the Services as part of their Phase 2 (Trade) training. Low standards on entry are less of a concern for the Royal Navy

and the RAF than for the Army. The Army recruits to the less technical branches, specifically the Infantry, who are most likely to need this support.

In-Service educational opportunities

Sources of funding

For education and training in the areas of Professional Development, courses are funded by the MOD either for attendance at a place of study in-Service or a third party provider. The individual is responsible for electing to undertake their own personal development.

In Service, the Standard Learning Credits (SLC) Scheme allows personnel to claim 80% of course fees up to a maximum of £175, tax free, every year, with individuals funding a 20% personal contribution. To qualify for SLC funding, the course of study must lead to a nationally recognised qualification, have substantial developmental value and directly benefit the Service. Students are able to claim the refund of fees on completion of the course of study or at the end of each academic year if the course runs over more than one year. Entitlement to SLC finishes when the individual leaves the Armed Forces.

Enhanced Learning Credits (ELC) may be claimed for learning which is an integral part of a nationally recognised qualification at Qualifications and Credit Framework Level 3 (A-Level or equivalent) or above, or an approved international equivalent qualification. Three claims are permitted during or after military Service. Awards are available in two tiers: a lower tier of up to £1,000 per year for those with six or more years' eligible Service, and an upper tier of £2,000 per year for those with eight or more years' eligible Service. Claims may be made either in Service or for up to ten years after leaving. In Service, the course undertaken must be of benefit to the Service, although this does not apply once the individual has left. Military education staff and the single Service chain of command are responsible for ELC applications and claims. As with SLC, the individual is required to fund 20% of the cost.

As [figures show](#), only a small number of registered personnel in all Services take advantage of their ELC entitlement. Three quarters of those who claim ELC do so towards the end of their Service or after they have left, therefore the Forces themselves benefit less from the development of personnel than would be the case if individuals used the scheme earlier in their careers. Service personnel may not know that particular schemes exist, owing to a lack of accessible information. The operational aspect of Service life means personnel have little time for courses not directly relevant for their next deployment. Some personnel may wait to be told when they need to attend a course, do not want to fill what free time they have with extra study, or give little thought to their future career either within or beyond the Services.

The provision available to Service personnel encompasses a broad range of opportunities for them to enhance their personal development and career prospects, both within the Forces and in their future civilian life. However, take-up of these opportunities – many of which are elective and require a degree of self-motivation from the individual – is not as high as it could be.

Functional Skills

Throughout their career, all personnel can access support with basic skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening, numeracy and Information and Communications Technology (ICT). Specialist help is also available for those personnel whose first language is not English. The Armed Forces have qualified civilian service staff, known in the Army as Basic Skills Development Managers (BSDM), plus a network of mentors and supporters, to help. Specialist literacy and numeracy support is provided through in-house provision or by contracted, external providers (e.g. Further Education colleges). All BSDM are trained Dyslexia Advisors to support individuals with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) to improve their educational attainment. Having a SpLD will not necessarily prevent enlistment and will be addressed on entry and during Service.

The [Veterans Transition Review](#) recommended the introduction of an online Personal Development Plan (PDP) for all Serving personnel, to encourage reflection on education, skills and achievement *in Service* and to plan for future career aspirations and development. In September 2018, the Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson, announced a [new package](#) to help Armed Forces personnel and their families through their careers and transition to civilian life. One of the scheme's recommendations is that all serving personnel are expected to have access to a PDP by 2020, to encourage Service Leavers to take responsibility for their educational needs and in preparation for civilian life. In line with the PDP, the Armed Forces offer additional courses and educational activities such as career development for life beyond the military.

[Technical level qualifications](#) (T-levels) form part of the government's overall reform of learning for 16-19 year olds. T-levels are Level 3 technical and vocational qualifications and are designed to help fill workplace gaps, to support progression onto higher education and to acquire the knowledge and skills that are needed in the workplace or future educational development. T-levels have recently been introduced as part of the Armed Forces learning programme; the effect and take-up of the scheme is yet to be published.

Vocational opportunities, Apprenticeships and Accreditation for learning

Phase 2 (Trade) training within the Armed Forces may take the form of an apprenticeship. All Armed Forces apprenticeships are accredited and linked to national standards across a range of sectors. The government has set [statutory guidance](#) for the Armed Forces to have a target of putting 50,000 Service personnel through apprenticeships between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2021.

[The Army is the largest apprenticeship provider in the UK](#) and offers academic support to Serving personnel and learning credits (where eligible) to veterans. These educational and vocational opportunities provide soldiers with transferable skills or qualifications (e.g. NVQs) both in-Service and to enhance their prospects for subsequent civilian employment as a veteran.

In the academic year 2011/12, 7,500 apprenticeships and 2,700 advanced apprenticeships were completed. There are two apprenticeship levels:

Level 2 Apprenticeship: Military trade training forms the core of this level, which is equivalent to five good GCSE passes. A range of key skills qualifications (including literacy and numeracy) are completed and a technical certificate is gained. By the end of the apprenticeship, the individual is qualified in their respective trade and receives an NVQ Level 2.

Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship: These apprenticeships apply to the technical trades and are equivalent to two A-level passes. To qualify for an advanced apprenticeship, five GCSEs at grade C or above or a Level 2 apprenticeship are required. Advanced apprentices gain the relevant technical certificates through their trade training as well as an NVQ Level 3 and additional key skills.

Qualifications achieved by specialist personnel such as technical, medical or human resources specialists, often relate directly to their national equivalent. Sometimes the national qualifications themselves form all or part of the relevant military course. The RAF has a [website](#) showing to what their qualifications translate. All three Services are in the process of creating matrices of training and accreditation with selected qualification providers.

Further and Higher levels of Study

Service Leavers in England, Scotland and Wales are able to take a first full Level 3 qualification (two A-Levels or vocational equivalent) or a first higher education qualification, with tuition fees paid in full by the state, for up to ten years after their departure. The [Publicly Funded Further and Higher Education scheme](#) (PF/HE) is available to UK-based personnel who have completed at least four years' Service and who left on or after 17 July 2008. Entitlement can be transferred to an eligible spouse or partner in the event of the Service person's death, or if their medical discharge means they are unable to use the scheme.

The [University Short Course Programme](#) (USCP) is part of a lifelong learning programme to help Service personnel make an effective contribution to Service life by developing their knowledge and skills. The courses are residential and available at universities throughout the UK. The USCP is not intended for resettlement purposes or to supplement formal training. Courses are available in Command, Leadership and Management; Regional and Strategic Studies and Languages. Qualifications are not awarded, but may contribute towards the Personal Development Record. USCP is open to all Service ranks from the tri-Services.

The Army offer the [Higher Defence Studies Programme](#) (HDSP). The Armed Forces have a requirement to train and educate personnel for specified posts at postgraduate (PG) level, either at universities or through professional bodies. The Defence Academy is the main provider of PG education and offers a range of part-time Masters courses, including an MSc in Defence Leadership Studies; MSc in Programme and Project Management; Masters of Business Administration and MSc in Cyberspace Operations. Programmes are primarily designed for mid-career military officers and above (Major or equivalent Service rank – Regular and Reserve) and equivalent grade MOD civil servants in a relevant career field or employment. These qualifications require personnel to 'return' service in lieu of the provision of the course. Courses are centrally funded, less travel and subsistence costs, which is borne by the employing unit. Serving officers in the rank range of Captain to Lieutenant Colonel (or other Service equivalent) have the opportunity to undertake a period of advanced study at university through the HDSP. The scheme includes full-time university higher degree courses lasting for one academic year, full-time Army Fellowships (which last for one or two academic terms) and the Yale World Fellows Programme. One example is the full-time Cambridge University MPhil in International Relations.

Education for spouses of in-Service Personnel

The [Veterans' Transition Review](#) recommended that families are made a greater part of the process of preparing for transition by giving them access to education modules, alongside employment advice.

The [Spousal Employment Support Trial](#) (SEST) was undertaken to explore spouses' perceived needs for employment support. The report found that half of the spouses of tri-Service personnel who took part in the trial used the available training grant of £879 per person to undertake a training course, with a choice of 19+ courses. Take-up of courses varied significantly across the two research locations (the UK and Cyprus). The SEST is no longer running, however, the evaluation led to a new package to support Armed Forces personnel and their families.

Learning and training opportunities for veterans

The [Veterans' Transition Review](#) suggests that improving the education and skills of Service personnel increases their chances of a good transition and may encourage retention in the Armed Forces.

The [Career Transition Partnership](#) is the MOD's official provider of resettlement services and policy, designed to assist Service Leavers with the transition into civilian life. The [Tri-Service Resettlement Policy](#) offers signposting to contracted resettlement services, including workshops and training courses. If Service Leavers are eligible and they attend a Contract Funded course, they will receive [Individual Resettlement Training Costs](#) (IRTC) of £534.00 or 20 days' equivalent training. The contract funded courses are pre-paid by the MOD, using IRTC funding for up to 20 days of training. Non-contract funded courses can be paid for by either using resettlement training grants or through self-funding. CTP courses are designed to provide transferable skills for the civilian workplace. Available courses can be found through the [CTP website](#). Full resettlement training terms and conditions can be found at [JSP534](#) (paragraph 0460).

As mentioned earlier, [Enhanced Learning Credits](#) may be claimed for up to ten years after leaving. Claims can be made up to £1,000 per year for those with six or more years' eligible Service, and an Upper Tier of £2,000 per year for those with eight or more years' eligible Service. The veteran is required to fund 20% of the cost.

The [Further Forces Programme](#) is delivered and funded in partnership with the Education and Training Foundation and the Gatsby Charitable Foundation to retrain Armed Forces Services leavers to teach technical subjects, including Science, Engineering and Technology. This programme focuses on the need to create a world class technical education system and helps to address the [skills shortage](#) in these subject areas. The programmes are delivered by the University of Portsmouth and the University of Brighton, to train and mentor veterans to work as Further Education teachers and trainers across England.

The Universities in Support of Wounded, Injured and Sick Service Personnel ([UNSWIS](#)) scheme, is a network of universities through the UK who support Service Leavers and veterans who are wounded, injured, sick or facing barriers to employment. The programme arranges visits and placements, providing an insight into jobs and educational opportunities within universities.

The [Step into Health](#) programme is open to all veterans and their spouse or partner, with the potential to work in the NHS in either clinical or non-clinical roles. The NHS recognises that the transferable

skills acquired in Services can be compatible with those required within NHS roles. Employers are working with the Armed Forces Community to provide career and development opportunities, regardless of background, previous work experience and qualifications.

The [Troops to Teachers](#) programme is open to Service Leavers of no more than five years after discharge from the Armed Forces. Veterans are paid a tax-free bursary of up to £40,000 to study for an undergraduate degree in secondary biology, physics, chemistry, computing, maths or modern foreign languages.

[Research](#) undertaken by the Royal British Legion shows that Early Service Leavers (ESLs) struggle in the labour market, with only 52% reported to be in education, training or employment six months after leaving. The [Career Transition Partnership-Future Horizons](#) programme exists to help Early Service Leavers (ESLs) successfully transition from military to civilian life. CTP are also working on a trial partnership with [Skills Development Scotland](#) to provide regional support to ESLs.

Conclusion

There is a vast amount of vocational and educational training available to in-Service personnel. Increasing in-Service engagement with the education and training opportunities on offer from an early stage, rather than waiting for resettlement, would bring benefits to the Services in the form of more skilled personnel as they develop through their Serving career. Creating greater awareness of such development opportunities would potentially aid recruitment to the Services, and on leaving, would help improve the prospects of eventual Service Leavers in the civilian marketplace.

There remains difficulty with the transferability of some of the specialist, in-Service training to civilian job roles, but there is a growing number of programmes addressing the need to meet this issue and to help address the [critical skills gap](#) in the job market.

The [Veterans' Transition Review](#) highlights that the Armed Forces offer educational and training opportunities that cannot be matched by any other employer. The majority of Service Leavers settle into civilian life and become valuable contributors to society and processes are in place to help those Early Service Leavers who are a group more susceptible to struggle.

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