

### Serving personnel

- As the largest apprenticeship provider in the UK, the Armed Forces (AF) offer numerous trade-related and full or part-funded optional vocational and academic qualifications, which can be translated (or are directly equivalent) for use in the civilian job market when transitioning from a military career into civilian work and life.
- Specific preparation for future employment is offered by the Ministry of Defence's (MOD's) Career Transition Partnership (CTP), but differs according to length of Service and reasons for leaving. However, use of its services is currently voluntary, so not all those leaving the AF will undertake any or all of this provision.
- Recent MOD data indicated that of those using its transition support services and responding to its survey (79% of all transitioning personnel), 86% were employed within six months of leaving the AF in 2018-2019. However, research suggested some users were not satisfied with the services provided, indicating that they experienced difficulty accessing courses and a lack of support from managers. The conclusion drawn was that transition workshops should therefore be made compulsory, and availability should be extended beyond the end of a military career.
- It has been suggested that transition planning and support sessions should be introduced much earlier in a military career, and the MOD's Defence Transition Services are currently developing an offer.
- Partners of AF personnel reported experiencing unique challenges in both gaining and maintaining employment, with frequent relocation often cited as a barrier to long-term employment, with an effect on pensions. The MOD responded with the Spouse Employment Support Trial and Partner Career Support Programme, both aimed at assisting partners' employment needs.

### Veteran support

- It is estimated that there are 936,000 working age veterans living in the UK in 2017. Annually, 14,000 military personnel leave the UK AF each year based on current estimates.
- Veterans and their families have gained increased recognition in the UK through the establishment of the pan-UK governmental Office for Veterans' Affairs and the Strategy for Our

Veterans document. The latter includes 'Employment, Education and Skills' as a key theme. Governmental initiatives to encourage the employment of veterans have also been launched.

- There are also a wide range of charity and private sector initiatives to assist ex-AF personnel into employment, and many of the latter have signed the Armed Forces Covenant demonstrating support for the AF community and providing employment and other opportunities to veterans.
- Research has found that veterans generally experience higher employment rates than the general UK population (86% compared to 76% respectively), with the highest proportion working in 'associate professional and technical roles'. However, and despite some variation across the three AF, some veteran groups experience fewer positive outcomes. These groups include women (reflecting a general UK employment trend), non-UK Black, Asian and minority ethnic veterans, and former non-commissioned ranks. Additionally, those leaving within four years of joining the AF, known as Early Service Leavers, have been reported as having a higher risk of a poor transition. The MOD has put into place the Future Horizons programme, to improve transition outcomes for the latter.
- Those that leave the AF after the age of 50 have also reported struggling to adapt to the civilian job-seeking process. Some have also experienced negative stereotyping from employers related to their age and military background, while others suggested they found themselves in a civilian employment situation that fell below their expectations (this applied to other veteran groups also). Whereas employers reported generally favouring the employment of female veterans, some found that the latter undervalued themselves, thereby exercising self-exclusion from skilled jobs they may otherwise be suited to.
- Veterans with health issues and those choosing to settle outside the south of England (particularly in rural locations) have also reported experiencing barriers to employment based on health and location respectively. Additionally, veterans based in Northern Ireland reportedly experience difficulties gaining civilian employment and accessing support after service in the AF, often due to security concerns associated with the legacy of the Northern Ireland conflict.
- Whilst a very low proportion of veterans claim long term unemployment benefits, those that do have reported a poor experience of the benefits system.
- Research suggested that some civilian employers may hold negative perceptions and stereotypes of veterans that may impact on their recruitment. This research further recommended that some employers' attitudes towards employing veterans needed challenging.
- It has been found that expertise developed during military service has the potential to plug skills shortages in the civilian labour market. However, it is assessed that the development of more effective strategies to match veterans' skillsets with appropriate employers is also needed.
- Currently, there is no published data on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on veterans' employment in the UK.