

Home, Housing and Community Research Programme

**Working together:
supporting the re-
integration of ex-
Service personnel.**

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Working Together – inter-organisational working to support the re-integration of ex-Service personnel

OUTLINE

- Transition from military to civilian life
- Research to date
- Scottish Support Service – preliminary findings
- UK Study - Working together – potential for improved collaboration and better outcomes
- Achieving integration – progress and challenges
- Collaboration as key facilitator in achieving integration for the ex-Services community?

Transition from military to civilian life

- Armed Forces – ‘contract of unlimited liability’ to state, including risk or loss of life (Dandeker et al 2006)
- But – when leave Forces – lose employment, social networks and accommodation
- UK Military Covenant – individuals and families are not disadvantaged by service (MOD, 2012)
 - Fair access to social housing? (e.g Scottish Government 2013)
- Most veterans make a successful transition but some experience complex and manifold difficulties
- Accessing housing is a significant barrier to smooth transition - fundamental to health, well-being, employment prospects, relationships and ability to participate in society.
- Over represented in UK Multiple Exclusion Homeless population (Johnson and Fitzpatrick 2012)

Ex-service personnel – a distinct group?

- Defined by a particular role, at a point in their life
 - UK definition is just one day's service
 - Period of service – highly variable
 - Who joins the services?
- Armed Forces Service – 'accommodation' almost always provided
- Forces life – institutionalised? Structured, 'camaraderie', 'group/team' oriented,
- Highly gendered - <10% serving personnel are women
- Combat experience – dangerous, traumatic (mental and physical), controversial?
- Contraction of Armed Forces in UK and financial constraint
- Preparation for leaving/discharge – may be ordered? May be sudden?
 - Ready for work? (Skills and health issues?)

- Fit with 'equality' in access to housing and support?

Evidence base – Robinson (2016)

- Lack of evidence on collaboration between housing service providers (e.g. compared to health and social care)
- Lack of evidence on access to housing (focus on homelessness)
- University of York (2014) report - called for ‘far more effective collaboration between all those working with ex-Service personnel in order to intervene early to identify the most vulnerable and better meet their housing and support needs’

Evidence base – service fragmentation (Robinson, 2016)

- Increasingly ‘messy’ provision of public services (Stoker, 1998) - fragmented provision across government and non-government sectors (e.g. Joint Services Housing Advice Office, local authority housing providers, registered social landlords, military charities).
- Organisational collaboration in its infancy; service provision is not consistent
- Social housing providers - concerned about supporting needs such as PTSD despite inconclusive evidence
- Ex-Service personnel remain ‘relatively unknown’ to public services; reluctant to seek help or identify as vulnerable.
- Need to recognise - organisations and practitioners require help to better understand the issues that ex-Service personnel experience
- Public support for Armed Forces - organisations and actors willing to collaborate?

Service Infrastructure – delivering Armed Forces Covenant

- Large number of Military Charities – largely run by ex-Service Personnel
 - E.g. DSC (2017) – 76 Armed Forces Charities in the UK providing mental health support (7% of total AF charities)
- Government reviews (Ashcroft, 2014) and revised infrastructure – varies across UK
 - Local Authority Veterans’ Champions (Scotland)
 - Directories produced to map out service duplication and gaps
 - Divergence in housing allocation practice and ‘local connection’
- Forces in Mind Trust
 - Big Lottery funding for research related to the Armed Forces Covenant
 - Research Centre and substantial programme of research and development (including University of Stirling research)
- New Services – ‘LIBOR’ funds in UK (e.g. new Veterans support service in Scotland)

Scottish Support Service – preliminary findings

- Feasibility Study and Development of Evaluation Plan
- Service review with service providers and service users
- Document review, interviews, 10 service user interviews
- Two service approaches: Transitional accommodation and visiting outreach support
- More than ‘signposting’ – directly supports service users to address a range of issues
- Year 1 building up to 200 service users - ongoing promotion
- Liaison with 18-19 different agencies (one accommodation ‘host’ is key)
- Competition/collaboration? Complements ‘veteran led’ services

Scottish Service: What Service Users Think

- Access to housing is key motivation to participate
- Wide range of other services accessed and welcomed
- ‘Overwhelming positive impact on lives’
- Service able to access resettlement flats, or permanent homes
- Financial and benefits advice particularly valuable
- Emotional wellbeing – loneliness and PTSD
- Service improvement? Mainly expansion, more *‘marketing’, ‘advertising’, ‘more noticeable’*

I just moved into the resettlement flat last week. I would not be here if it were not for X. Being here I am more confident, I have more self-esteem, I feel optimistic, very positive.

'I would not have been able to clear my debt without Y.'

'I am now £100/week better off because of the help Z has given me with benefits'.

I really appreciate how W takes time out of the day to get a bacon butty or something like that, to get you out of your head, it makes you know that you're safe. W has gone above and beyond for me. It's that level of service that means the most.

'I would still be in [temporary accommodation] now if it were not for X. Before her, I was going off the rails'.

X is helping me get on ESA. I was ruled as fit for work and now X is helping me to appeal. I waited too long on the Advice Shop to help. I would probably still be waiting without X.

X gives me hope, X gives me structure. I have struggled with suicide, especially after my brother killed himself. X actually got money from a charity so that I could go to his funeral. To visit his place of rest. X is always available for me. I feel less alone.

UK Study - Working Together – Research Questions

Three points of transition from military to civilian life: pre-discharge; transition military to civilian life; and beyond transitional period.

Research Questions:

1. How best can collaboration between the many military charities and public service providers be developed to improve access to housing services for ex-Service personnel?
2. How can the transition process from military into civilian life be better managed to improve housing outcomes for vulnerable ex-Service personnel?
3. What lessons can be learned across the UK?
4. What information do practitioners need to help ex-Service personnel to access housing?

Study Period – 2018-2020

Working Together – Research Methods

Support the use of evidence to inform improve collaborative practice

- Organisational Case Studies
- Online surveys of serving and ex-service personnel
- Interviews with key stakeholders, from organisations other than the case studies
- Advisory Group – housing providers and armed forces
- External partner – Housing Options Scotland

- Potential to improve outcomes for ex-Service personnel **beyond meeting housing needs.**

Other Progress? Quilgars et al (2018) Housing Pathways of Single Veterans (longitudinal qualitative study)

- Housing Pathways still complex - Unsettled before joining Forces, episodes of homelessness after leaving, triggers for later homelessness (e.g. relationship breakdown)
- Recent leavers – more positive support experiences; those who left previously may be ‘more disconnected’
- Veteran status – ‘positive identity’
- Military charities – provide a range of housing and support models
- ‘Partnership working enabled a range of housing, employment and health and well being services to be delivered’ (p6).
- Preference for ‘veteran-dedicated’ services, satisfaction with veteran sector accommodation
- Location, rent and health needs could make it hard to find and sustain work.
- More peer support?
- Still need better collaboratio, more preventive activity

Achieving Integration – Further Challenges

- What do we mean by re-integration?
- Social, economic and labour market integration
- Settled Housing – but further support/intervention needed?
- Social security system remains a significant barrier (Scullion et al 2018)
 - Complex family relationships
 - Majority reported physical or mental health issues
 - Limited experience of paid work prior to Forces – most joined soon after leaving school
 - Most had some work experience post-Forces
 - Experiences of complex social security system were extremely challenging
 - Need specialist advice for Veterans

Facilitating re-integration of ex-forces personnel

- Is re-integration realistic for this group? To what extent? What would it look like?
- ‘Veteran dedicated’ provision? ‘Veteran-led’ provision?
- Compare with other groups of homeless people?
- Peer support ?
 - Most have a smooth transition?
 - Peer Support for those facing more challenging transition?
- Contribution of collaborative working? Measurement of impact on outcomes?
- Welcome feedback from perspectives of other countries?

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