Ex-service personnel in the criminal justice system: **Barriers to identification and uptake of support**

Nacro and the University of Northampton
March 2024

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Institute for Public Safety Crime and Justice
University of Northampton Institute for Social Innovation and Impact
FiMT forces in mind trust
COMMUNITY FUND

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We work across the criminal justice system and our justice services aim to break the cycle of crime and disadvantage. We believe that rehabilitation must be at the heart of an effective justice system. And that for people who enter the criminal justice system it should be the start of building something better, not a road to nowhere. We've been working in this field for more than 50 years - we know that with the right support, people can and do turn their lives around.

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FiMT

Foreword by Forces in Mind Trust

Whilst the majority of ex-service personnel make a successful transition back into civilian life, we know that unfortunately some come into contact with the criminal justice system. However, given a lack of comprehensive data about this cohort, this can create challenges in providing tailored support to them. Forces in Mind Trust therefore funded this important research to understand how we can more effectively identify ex-service personnel within the system to better understand their needs and ensure that they have access to appropriate support.

This key report highlights the barriers to this identification, which includes a lack of clarity about who constitutes a veteran, and also of the benefit of disclosing their service history, given there may be potential concerns about the implications of doing so.

It also allows us to better understand the complexity of the support landscape, as well as the lack of awareness of available support both within prison and the community, and how these challenges can be overcome.

But we also need to recognise that being involved in the criminal justice system is a journey and therefore the research recognises the need for an improvement in data throughout the whole journey and across the entire justice system – through police, probation and prison service – to see meaningful improvement.

By addressing these barriers and challenges to identification, we can achieve a step towards ensuring that ex-service personnel in the criminal justice system and their families can access targeted support, resulting in a prevention of future offending – benefitting both the individual and society. We know that ex-service personnel have a lot to offer the nation and we need to support them in doing so.

Michelle Alston
Chief Executive, Forces in Mind Trust

Foreword by Nacro and the University of Northampton

We at Nacro and the University of Northampton are proud to present this final report which aims to contribute significantly to the limited field of knowledge around the barriers to identification and uptake of support for ex-service personnel and their families in the criminal justice system.

Ex-service personnel who offend make up a small but significant proportion of people in prison and under supervision in the community in England, Scotland and Wales. Through interviews with over 100 ex-service personnel and a wide range of stakeholders, this report sheds light on important barriers to support, as well as factors shaping engagement with services. Identifying that someone has served in the Armed Forces is key to being able to access available support and the report outlines barriers we found to identification. We put forward a set of recommendations we believe will help improve both identification and take up of support for ex-service personnel and their families.

We would like to reiterate our thanks to the ex-service personnel who contributed to this research and allowed for a meaningful understanding of their experiences and also our thanks to all participants who shared their time and expertise.

We hope this report does justice to these important contributions and will ultimately help ensure ex-service personnel and their families can access the support they need.

Campbell Robb,
Chief Executive, Nacro

Professor Matthew Callender
Director of the Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice, University of Northampton

Executive summary

Background to the research

In August 2021, Nacro, in partnership with the University of Northampton (UON), was commissioned by Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) to conduct research into the barriers to identification and uptake of support for ex-service personnel and their families in the criminal justice systems (CJS) of England, Wales, and Scotland. This research aims to increase knowledge in this area to enable policy makers and service deliverers to better identify and meet the needs of this group, with the intention of reducing the likelihood of ex-service personnel entering the CJS or reoffending.

Previous academic research as well as research produced by FiMT has attempted to establish the number of ex-service personnel in the CJS, as well as the reasons they offend. Most estimates have suggested that ex-service personnel make the most significant, and potentially the largest, occupational subset in prison. As of October 2023, the Ministry of Justice estimates that, in England and Wales, approximately 3.6% of the prison population that was asked the identifying question had disclosed that they had previously served in the Armed Forces. Office for National Statistics analysed the 2021 Census data to determine that 4.86% of people in prisons in England and Wales are ex-service personnel. In 2019, the Directory of Social Change estimated that 3.1% of Scotland's prison population had previously served in the Armed Forces.

There is less recent data available on the estimates of ex-service personnel under supervision by the Probation Service in England and Wales and justice social work (JSW) in Scotland. Beyond that, there is little information on how many ex-service personnel are processed by the police in England, Wales and Scotland. The available data therefore provides a limited picture, only considering ex-service personnel who choose to disclose their service status. The current research was therefore commissioned to understand the barriers to identification of ex-service personnel and their families through the different stages of the CJS, as well as any barriers to uptake of support.

The research was conducted in two phases: Phase 1, from August 2021 to April 2022, consisted of substantive interviews with 29 key national stakeholders who work with or are involved in policymaking related to ex-service personnel in the CJS. The second phase (Phase 2) of the research consisted of in-depth primary research across eight local sites which included interviews with 104 ex-service personnel in prison and in the community under supervision, as well as 71 professionals working in different parts of the justice system and other local stakeholders. These sites were:

- County Durham, Hull, Plymouth, and Staffordshire in England
- Bridgend and Swansea in Wales
- Edinburgh and Perth and Kinross in Scotland, with a supplementary prison visit in Stirling.

Key Findings

In the main body of this report, we set out our detailed findings across the different stages of the criminal justice journey, namely police, courts, prison and supervision in the community. This includes current processes for identification in that stage of the criminal justice journey, as well as the barriers to identification and uptake of support which were identified. There are inevitably differences in our findings depending on the stage of the journey which will be particularly relevant to those stakeholders and these are detailed in the main body of the report. However, there are also common themes which emerged across the journey, which we set out below:

- **A reluctance to seek help amongst ex-service personnel**
- **A lack of understanding amongst ex-service personnel about why they were being asked to identify as having served in the Armed Forces**
- **A complex landscape and lack of awareness of available support in the community**
- **Capacity and knowledge of professionals**
- **Use of language when asking about service history and interpretation of the term 'veteran'**
- **Belief amongst stakeholders that shame influences decisions to identify/take up support, although very few ex-service personnel expressed this.**

Recommendations

We make a number of recommendations which are grouped in line with the two key questions posed in the research question.

Recommendations to improve identification of ex-service personnel who come into contact with the CJS (Recommendations 1 -7)

Recommendations to address or mitigate barriers to support experienced by ex-service personnel in the CJS and their families (Recommendations 8-19)

More detail and context can be found on these in the final section of the report.

Recommendations to improve identification of ex-service personnel who come into contact with the CJS

1. Ensure the rationale for asking about ex-service personnel status is communicated when the question is asked.
2. Expand the identification mechanisms in policing beyond police custody: this includes increasing staff awareness regarding ex-service personnel, and the signs to look out for whilst in the community. This would allow police offers to have more opportunities to refer ex-service personnel into appropriate services).
3. Justice social work should embed the question, "Have you served for a day or more in the Armed Forces or reserves?" in the list of questions asked during induction and when writing JSW reports. Both JSW and probation should consistently ask the question and properly store and disseminate this information appropriately.
4. Further research into the perceptions of ex-service personnel amongst the judiciary and legal professionals is recommended.
5. Consider if/how identification status could be shared between different IT systems and therefore shared more easily between different agencies working within the CJS.
6. Standardise the identification question to clearly convey broad eligibility and the meaning of 'ex-service personnel' and/or 'veteran'. Ex-service personnel organisations can help promote the expanded, inclusive meaning of the term 'veteran'.
7. Build multiple opportunities for ex-service personnel to share their service status into each part of the criminal justice pathway.

Recommendations to address or mitigate barriers to support experienced by ex-service personnel in the CJS and their families

8. Establish automated processes of referral following identification in police custody.
9. Develop engagement strategies to maintain contact with ex-service personnel who may be at risk of offending or require additional support following transition from the Armed Forces into the community.
10. Improve communications to ex-service personnel and their families regarding eligibility to access support, including the development of specialist marketing materials and advertising campaigns.
11. Develop varied 'veteran-informed' provisions of mental health support pathways that address a range of needs. In Wales and Scotland, this could be achieved by developing joined-up pathways similar to Op NOVA and Op COURAGE.
12. Provide 'veteran-informed' training to all staff who work with ex-service personnel: including awareness of who is eligible to access support; indicators that can help identify ex-service personnel; the additional support needs they may have, and the additional support options available for them.
13. Continue work already underway to ensure representation of ex-service personnel in the different parts of the justice system, by assigning Armed Forces champions/SPOCs.
14. Expand and ringfence resources available for the ViCSO role. Make ViCSO a full-time paid position in prisons, particularly those with significant numbers of identified ex-service personnel.

15. Establish longer-term commissioning of services to improve continuity of service provision.

16. Increase face-to-face engagement with services for ex-service personnel in prison to break down barriers and develop trust.

17. Develop accessible visual/written materials available at touch points across the CJS.

18. Support for ex-service personnel as they are released from prison should account for their service history, mental health needs, disabilities, and offending history.

19. Develop a database for stakeholders with information about third sector and other organisations that provide services to ex-service personnel in the justice system. The database should be secure so that organisations can detail if they work with those convicted of sexual and other violent offences.

Contents

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our appreciation to all the ex-service personnel who participated in this research. Their openness has allowed for a rich and detailed report. We hope it makes a meaningful contribution to the experiences of those ex-service personnel who have been in contact with the criminal justice system.

We are grateful to Forces in Mind Trust for funding this research, and our thanks to Clare Crookenden for her support throughout the course of the project.

We would like to extend our thanks to all stakeholders who participated in this research, including Police, Probation, and third sector staff. Our particular thanks to the HMPPS and Scottish Prison Service staff who facilitated the interviews in prison, especially all veterans in custody support officers (ViCSOs) without whose contribution this report would be incomplete.

We would also like to thank this project's steering group, who helped us connect with key organisations and stakeholders, and guided us throughout this project: Carrie Rogers (HMPPS), Marek Musiol (HMPPS), Steven Calder (HMPPS), Lisa McKenna (HMPPS, Wales), Jasber Jittlar (Ministry of Justice); Chief Inspector David Struggles (Greater Manchester Police); Shabina Aqil (HMPPS, Wales), Ivan Trethewey (NHS England), Ellen Martin (NHS England), Governor Andrew Hodge (Scottish Prison Service), Scott Muir (Sacro), and Mathieu Bergeal (HMPPS).

Special thanks to this project's advisory group: Krissie Stephens, (Military Corrective Training Centre), Simon Denny (ISII), John Sherriff (Goodwill Solutions), and Rachel Brunt (Ministry of Defence).

Introduction, Context and Approach

1. Introduction

In August 2021, FiMT commissioned Nacro in partnership with the University of Northampton to conduct research into the barriers to identification and uptake of support for ex-service personnel and their families in the criminal justice systems of England, Wales, and Scotland.

The research project was conducted over two phases. The first, national phase (Phase 1) consisted of interviewing multiple stakeholders who work with or are involved in policymaking related to ex-service personnel in the justice system. This helped identify key areas of inquiry for the local, in-depth phase of the research (Phase 2). The second, local phase consisted of in-depth primary research examining the processes of identification and support in eight local sites, which included interviews with ex-service personnel in prison and in the community under supervision, as well as professionals working in different parts of the justice system and other local stakeholders.

The local sites were:

- County Durham, Hull, Plymouth, and Staffordshire in England
- Bridgend and Swansea in Wales
- Edinburgh and Perth and Kinross in Scotland, with a supplementary prison visit in Stirling

The report is structured to look separately at the different parts of the CJS journey, namely police contact and courts; prison; probation and JSW in the community; with additional chapters on the third sector and families. This allows interested parties to go directly to the specific chapters relevant to them. This structure inevitably also means that where there are common themes in terms of barriers to identification and support, these are set out in more than one chapter. These are:

- **Reluctance to seek help:** Stakeholders and ex-service personnel reported the reluctance of ex-service personnel to seek help before, during, and after contact with the justice system. Pride and a sense of self-reliance were often cited as reasons why ex-service personnel were reluctant to ask for help.
- **Lack of understanding about why they were being asked to identify as having served in the Armed Forces:** Those interviewed often stated that the purpose of identification at different stages of the justice process was not clear. This influences the decision to identify as having served in the Armed Forces, as they were not sure why the question is being asked, and what implications it may have on their journey through the justice system.
- **Complex landscape and lack of awareness of available support in the community:** The current support landscape is complex, with a considerable number of support pathways in prison and in the community. However, many of those who had participated in this research were not aware of available support. In addition, they often stated that they were only aware of the support available for them after they had contact with the justice system.
- **Capacity and knowledge of professionals:** Capacity issues were raised by prison staff in England, Wales, and Scotland, and probation staff in England and Wales, impacting their ability to routinely identify and support ex-service personnel. This was exacerbated by limited knowledge in some areas of the most appropriate services for ex-service personnel in the justice system.
- **Use of language when asking about service history:** During our research, it emerged that the term 'veteran' was not commonly understood to include ex-service personnel with shorter services and/or no combat experience. Many ex-service personnel were not aware that their service history made them eligible to identify as a 'veteran' and seek ex-service personnel-specific support services.
- **Shame influencing decisions to identify/take up support:** Many stakeholders expressed that ex-service personnel may feel shame about their offence and may be reluctant to identify themselves as a former members of the Armed Forces. However, it is important to note that very few ex-service personnel expressed shame in this way, or that it prevented them from self-identifying or taking up support.

This research was referenced in the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) Veterans' Strategy Action Plan for 2022-2024 (Office for Veterans' Affairs, 2022, p. 26), wherein the Ministry of Justice stated it will *"consider the findings of research into identifying veterans within the Criminal Justice System and explore what more can be done to improve the identification and recording of veterans in the prison and probation system, so that the right support can be put in place"*. To this effect, this collaborative research project aims to provide evidence for the OVA's Veteran Strategy Action Plan.

1.1 Definitions and terminology

In this report, we use the term 'ex-service personnel' to describe people who have left the Armed Forces. There are several terms which are widely understood in the general literature that are used to describe people who have left the Armed Forces. Some of these other terms may be used in participant quotes from the interviews but, where possible, we will maintain consistency by using 'ex-service personnel' within the body of the report and our commentary. The implications of using particular terminology will be further discussed in Chapter 5, for example, when highlighting the identification of ex-service personnel.

1.2 List of abbreviations

ACEs	Adverse Childhood Experiences
ASAP	Armed Services Advice Project
CJS	Criminal justice system
COPFS	The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service
DASA	Defence Analytical Services and Advice
FEC	Forces Employment Charity, formerly referred to as RFEA
FiMT	Forces in Mind Trust
HMP	His Majesty's Prison. At the time of the fieldwork, the service was known as Her Majesty's Prison
HMPPS	His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service. At the time of the fieldwork, the service was known as Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
JSW	Justice Social Work
L&D	Liaison and Diversion
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
OVA	Office for Veteran Affairs
PTSD	Post traumatic stress disorder
RBL	Royal British Legion
SPS	Scottish Prison Service
SSAFA	Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association, the Armed Forces Charity
ViCS	Veterans-in-Custody Support
ViCSO	Veterans-in-Custody Support Officer
YOI	Young Offenders Institution

2. Context

This chapter will review existing literature which has inquired into the lives of ex-service personnel in the justice system. An important caveat to note is that existing research concerning military personnel largely centres around the United States due to the size of their military services. Regardless, the US' ex-service population is also overrepresented in their prison population, and while references will largely be made to research produced in the UK, there is still learning that can be taken from US experiences. References have been made accordingly, where appropriate. Exact estimates of the population of ex-service personnel within the CJS in England, Wales and Scotland vary. Figures provided by the Ministry of Defence suggest around 3.5% of individuals in prison in England and Wales have served in the military (DASA, 2010). The DASA statistics estimated that approximately 3.5% - 4% of individuals in custody and on community orders in England and Wales were ex-service personnel, whilst other estimates suggested that the proportion in the prison population ranges from 3.5% to 16.75% (The Royal British Legion, 2011).

In October 2023, the Ministry of Justice estimated that 3.6% of the prison population that was asked the identification question had previously served in the Armed Forces[1] as of June 2023. Office for National Statistics analysed the 2021 Census data to determine that 4.86% of people in prisons in England and Wales are ex-service personnel[2]. 3% of people in prison in Scotland reported having been in the Armed Forces in the 2022 Scottish Prison Survey (SPS, Scottish Government, 2022). Nearly all of those in prison were male (99.6%, DASA, 2010). More specifically, 77% were ex-Army, 15% were ex-Royal Navy, and 8% were ex-Royal Air Force (DASA, 2010). Since the publication of the DASA report in 2010, it was found that ex-service personnel form a substantial, and perhaps the largest, occupational subset within the existing prison population. The available data while useful provides a limited picture, only taking into account ex-service personnel who choose to disclose their service status.

Following the publication of the DASA report, there has been significant research into understanding the needs of ex-service personnel who struggled with the transition out of the Armed Forces, with the aim of providing them with specialised support. These efforts include, but are not limited to, mapping general support available for ex-service personnel (rather than specifically related to criminal justice) including the Veterans' Support Map[3] and Map of Need[4].

2.1 Experiences before coming into contact with the CJS

Most ex-service personnel have successful transitions into civilian life, or 'civvy street' (The Howard League for Penal Reform [HLPR], 2011). Haddow *et al.* (2021) suggest that the reason a small percentage of ex-service personnel enter the CJS could include negative feelings such as pessimism or disappointment toward the Armed Forces; or disappointment from receiving medical or dishonourable discharges. Ex-service personnel who enter the CJS are more likely than the general population in the CJS to be employed (Short, *et al.*, 2018), more likely to misuse alcohol, and more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (Elbogen, *et al.*, 2012; Macmanus, *et al.*, 2013). They are also likely to have held a lower rank in the Armed Forces (Brewer & Herron, 2022). Research suggests relationship problems, financial insecurity, accommodation issues, and lack of consistent or fulfilling employment also play a role in increasing their chances of entering the CJS (Elbogen, *et al.*, 2012; Macmanus, *et al.*, 2013).

[1] It is important to note that this is true of 67.6% of the prison population: this includes those who have been asked the question on the basic custody screening and provided a response, as well as those who were identified before the question was introduced in the basic custody screening tool. Source: Ministry of Justice. Accessed October 2023: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65395730e6c968000daa9b24/Ex-service_personnel_in_the_prison_population_2023.pdf

[2] Source: Office of National Statistics. Accessed October 2023: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/armedforcescommunity/articles/livingarrangementsofukarmedforcesveteransenglandandwales/census2021

[3] Source: Veterans' Gateway. Accessed October 2023: https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk/local-support/

[4] Source: Armed Forces Covenant Fund. Accessed October 2023: https://covenantfund.org.uk/the-map-of-need/

Crewe (2011) and Stevenson (2010) drew parallels between the CJS and the Armed Forces, arguing that both settings have their own institutional social world. Crewe (2011) suggested that, like the Armed Forces, the CJS also has its own customs, practices, procedures, language and culture, especially in custodial settings, such as prisons. Basic training acts as the initial immersion into the Armed Forces, where their identity is remodelled from 'individual' to 'member of Armed Forces' as they adopt the new culture and become part of the Armed Forces community (Stevenson, 2010). This identity continues beyond their period of employment as ex-service personnel may continue to identify with the community of former or serving Armed Forces personnel. As Lord Ashcroft (2014) highlighted, leaving the Armed Forces identity behind with your employment can be difficult, and adopting a civilian identity once more can be a challenge. Emsley (2013) argued that a military identity is one in which an individual has been trained and institutionalised to essentially be 'combat ready' constantly. Furthermore, Emsley argues this state of being does not simply dissolve once the individual moves from 'serving member' to 'veteran' and instead deserves attention and support. Moreover, military service often gives an individual a sense of a 'protective family' – a community based on sharing values, experiences and socialising (Finnegan, *et al.*, 2011). When someone leaves the service, they may lose a key aspect of their social life and part of their identity. Indeed, Best and Savic (2015) argue that our sense of self is partly a result of our social group memberships. Consistent and familiar social support are therefore likely to function as a protective factor against offending.

Ex-service personnel are more likely to have lower educational attainment than the general population and are often recruited from socially disadvantaged areas (HLPR, 2011; Child Rights International Network, 2019). This may create challenges when ex-service personnel leave their career in the Armed Forces and return to their home area (HLPR, 2011). Post-transition they may have to contend with boredom, difficulty finding employment due to their lower educational attainment, community disorganisation, and their social identity, increasing the risk of offending (ibid.). Moreover, it was found in US-based research that military service can be a stabilising experience for ex-service personnel from such backgrounds, and their transition out of military service may put them back into the unstable housing and employment conditions that they originally escaped through their service, creating a destabilising atmosphere for a group already requiring support (Hyde, *et al.*, 2022).

Studies conducted in military populations similar to that of the UK, such as the US and Canada, found that adverse childhood experiences are more prevalent in the population of the Armed Forces

Studies conducted in military populations similar to that of the UK, such as the US and Canada, found that adverse childhood experiences[5] (ACEs) are more prevalent in the population of the Armed Forces (Afifi, *et al.*, 2016; Katon, *et al.*, 2015). Similarly, Murray *et al.* (2022) explored the journeys to serious sexual or violent offending by ex-service personnel and found that many of them had experienced ACEs. Asmussen *et al.* (2020) noted that the most frequently experienced ACEs are physical, sexual and psychological abuse, and witnessing domestic violence. There is a well-documented association between experiencing ACEs and later anti-social behaviour, violence, offending, self-harm, mental health issues and substance misuse (Gordon, Nemeroff, & Felitti, 2020). Murray *et al.* (2022) found the motivation to join the Armed Forces ranged from seeking escape from adversity; personal transformation; economic security; opportunities to fulfil their risk-seeking behaviours; and searching for a sense of belonging. Ex-service personnel have a high prevalence of mental health difficulties and substance misuse (Fear, Jones, & Murphy, 2010; Iversen, *et al.*, 2007), though many do not seek help for mental health issues (Mark, *et al.*, 2019). The most common mental health difficulties are anxiety, depression, psychosis, and personality stress disorders, with these difficulties diagnosed at a higher rate than their civilian counterparts (Williamson, *et al.*, 2022). Rhead *et al.* (2020) found that ex-service personnel who had served at the time of recent military operations were more likely to report post-traumatic stress disorder and alcohol misuse as compared to those who had not served in the Armed Forces. Randles and Finnegan (2022) established that many ex-service personnel avoid seeking help for mental health issues due to perceived stigma and a culture of stoicism and self-reliance within the military. Ex-service personnel who had served in active combat in Iraq or Afghanistan were also less likely than those with lesser combat exposure to seek support for their mental health, disliked talking in groups more and experienced higher levels of guilt and shame (Randles & Finnegan, 2022).

The figures provided by current research conducted to understand the number of ex-service personnel in the CJS are estimates and it has proven difficult to identify the numbers of ex-service personnel within separate stages of the CJS: for example, police contact and probation (Grand-Clement, *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, research regarding offending characteristics is largely representative of the people who have been identified as ex-service personnel in prison. The DASA report (2010) and the Howard League for Penal Reform (2011) also highlighted that ex-service personnel are less likely than the general population to offend, but that the crimes they are sentenced for are more likely to be violent and/or sexual. For sexual offences, DASA (2010) found ex-service personnel have a 13% higher rate of imprisonment than people who had not served in the Armed Forces. There also seem to be increased rates of sexual offences towards children by ex-service personnel, with the Howard League identifying the rates as being 24% versus 10.9% in the general prison population (2011).

HMIP (2014) found that ex-service personnel who were sentenced to a prison term in England and Wales were more likely to be first-time offenders, more likely to be held in Category B prisons, and more likely to be serving longer sentences. The implication that ex-service personnel may be perpetrators of violent crime is in keeping with research from the United States (Black, Carney, Peloso, & Woolson, 2005; Booth-Kewley, *et al.*, 2010) and is thus not unique to England, Scotland, and Wales. During their time in prison, ex-service personnel appear to fare very similarly to other people in terms of challenges as well as opportunities experienced in prison, though report less drug and alcohol use but more difficulties in terms of family relationships and mental health (HLPR, 2011).

[5] Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are highly stressful and potentially traumatic events or situations that occur during childhood and/or adolescence. Examples of such events include neglect, abuse, intergenerational trauma, history of substance misuse in the family. This list is not exhaustive as ACEs can manifest in individuals through a variety of experiences. Source: Young Minds UK. https://www.youngminds.org.uk/professional/resources/understanding-trauma-and-adversity/

2.2 Literature on current provision of and barriers to identification of ex-service personnel

Wainwright *et al.* (2017) suggest that the barriers to identification of ex-service personnel in the CJS include: pride, self-esteem, stigma, and concern that prison staff would not understand their issues. This may be mitigated when veterans can be supported by those who share their military background. For example, Iverson and Greenberg (2009) found that ex-service personnel expressed a preference for receiving mental health support from professionals who are also ex-service personnel. Furthermore, prison staff who have served also believed their shared background in the Armed Forces added value to their role and helped with relationships with ex-service personnel in custody (Turner & Moran, 2021). Based on the existing research, it is possible that both staff members and ex-service personnel who have offended may 'override' the usual social barriers within the CJS of 'prisoner vs. prison staff' or 'arrestee vs. police officer'.

Davies and Davies (2018) highlighted that ex-service personnel can be identified within custody suites at police stations, which may present an opportunity to provide or signpost to appropriate support services, thereby providing early intervention in their journey through the CJS. Cooper, Jones and Fossey's (2018) research across police custody suites in England, Wales and Scotland found that 88% of custody suites in Wales had a 'veteran police champion', compared to 41% and 28% of custody suites in Scotland and England respectively.

The Meteorite Project, funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust via Venture Trust, argued 'hidden veterans' can be those who are discharged from the Armed Forces for poor conduct, those with offending backgrounds, early service leavers, and those who remain in the CJS who struggle to identify themselves as 'veterans' (The Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund, 2019). This project focused on the importance of keeping 'hidden veterans' in mind and providing them with access to services to help them successfully transition back to civilian life. However, as highlighted by FiMT, asking individuals if they have a service history relies on truthful self-reporting[6].

2.3 Literature on support and barriers to support for ex-service personnel

Grand-Clement *et al.* (2020) highlighted that ex-service personnel's resilience creates a barrier to the ability to ask for and receive support. For example, self-sufficiency and resilience are day-to-day operational requirements for those in the Armed Forces and thus feelings of anxiety, fear and failure may arise at the prospect of telling others about their emotions or distress (Grand-Clement, *et al.*, 2020). Another reason individuals may choose not to draw attention to their history in the Armed Forces is because of the perceived potential impact on legal proceedings, with some individuals fearing that they would be sentenced to longer prison sentences for violent offences than non-ex-service personnel due to having previously been trained in combat (Davies and Davies, 2018).

[6] Source: FiMT. Accessed October 2023: https://www.fim-trust.org/outcome-area/criminal-justice/criminal-justice-policy-statement/

Research suggests that Armed Forces personnel may be apprehensive about seeking help for mental health issues due to concerns around the potential impact this could have on their military careers. Williamson, Greenberg and Stevelink (2019) highlighted that in UK and American military samples, personnel often believe seeking help from mental health services can negatively impact their military career so they avoid seeking support during their service. A qualitative study of 17 ex-service personnel in the UK showed that many participants internalised feelings of shame and embarrassment, highlighting that help-seeking can make some feel "weak" or "inadequate" (Mellotte, *et al.,* 2017). Further research indicated that ex-service personnel's self-assessment of mental health needs often downplayed their need for care, often opting to seek help at a crisis point, such as suicidal ideation or putting others at risk of harm (Rafferty, *et al.,* 2020).

A 2014 report by HMIP found that the provision of overall support within prisons varied by location and was inconsistent across nations (HMIP, 2014). The Veterans in Custody Support (ViCS) scheme is not formally mandated by HMPPS or the SPS, therefore there is no obligation for every prison in England, Wales, and Scotland to have this service. In 2016, the Scottish government confirmed that a Veterans in Custody Support Officer (ViCSO) has been appointed in every Scottish prison (Scottish Government, 2016). In England and Wales, however, there was no reliable data to suggest that all prisons in both nations had appointed ViCSOs (HMIP, 2014). HMIP in 2014 also reported that there was some variation in the implementation of the programme in the prisons that had appointed ViCSOs. Additionally, ViCSO is a voluntary position, and not a separate role within prisons, creating challenges for prison staff in terms of the time and resources available for the ViCSO programme (ibid.)

In Wales, The Supporting Transition of Military Personnel (SToMP) project ran from 2016 to 2021 with the primary goals being to design, implement and embed a consistent whole-system approach to identifying and supporting ex-service personnel across Wales, throughout the CJS process; and to 'seek to prevent ex-armed services personnel from entering the CJS in the first place'.[7] Some key achievements cited by the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Cymru partnership who was the senior responsible owner of the project were:

- Implementing bespoke pathways for ex-service personnel in each prison to ensure support and access to national helplines.
- Setting up a network of champions across Wales from various criminal justice agencies, including the police and Probation Service.
- Delivering awareness-raising training and campaigns, highlighting the experiences of ex-service personnel in the CJS, and creating branded materials visible at police custody, courts, probation offices and prisons which alert all to the specific support ex-service personnel can access.
- Commissioning research to better identify and support ex-service personnel in the CJS (Davies & Davies, 2019) and research on ex-service personnel, healthy relationships and domestic abuse (Madoc-Jones, *et al.*, 2017).

[7] Source: IOM Cymru. Accessed October 2023: https://www.iomcymru.org.uk/ExArmed-Service-Personnel/

The evaluation of SToMP by Davies and Davies (2019) concluded that it had delivered a range of positive actions to improve the identification of ex-service personnel and to raise awareness across the CJS of their specific needs, as well as bringing together a range of stakeholders to improve services. The key recommendation from the evaluation report was to implement and standardise routine data collection to allow for a more thorough, empirically focused evaluation of work to improve the identification of, and support provided to, ex-service personnel in the CJS in the future. Although the project has ended, the IOM Cymru partnership has pledged to "continue to oversee work relating to ex-armed service personnel in Wales, respond to the project's evaluation recommendations, sustain the achievements to date, monitor recording, and maintain relationships to ensure the continuation of joint working practices between the service charities and criminal justice partners, and will monitor performance and use the existing SPOCs /champions across HMPPS to ensure the high standard is maintained[8].

Phillips (2014) argues support services should be coordinated and standardised across the CJS pathway for ex-service personnel. If not, individuals will be relying on 'luck' to receive support in their local area.

Ex-service personnel may experience embarrassment and shame around lacking experience with expected responsibilities after their time in prison, for example applying for jobs, or paying utility bills (Hyde, *et al.*, 2022). This could be due to many ex-service personnel having entered the military at an early age and having, therefore, had no experience in completing 'civilian' tasks. Even for ex-service personnel who were completing these tasks before their military service, upon re-entry into civilian life, the landscape of paying utility bills or applying for jobs may have altered dramatically during the time they were in the Armed Forces.

2.4 Policy and practice to support ex-service personnel in the CJS

The Armed Forces Covenant was published in 2011 and its core principles were enshrined in the Armed Forces Act 2011. The Covenant functions as a pledge by those who sign it to ensure serving personnel, ex-service personnel and their families can access government and commercial goods and services in the same way as any other citizen, without barriers. In 2015, the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust awarded 14 grants to support ex-service personnel aimed at reducing re-offending and supporting those at risk of offending; this amounted to £4.6 million. In 2018, a further £1.1 million of The Covenant Fund was used to reach more veterans and continue working with those already receiving support[9].

The Office for Veterans' Affairs in 2022 committed to implementing mechanisms to offer the digital verification of veteran status (Office for Veterans' Affairs, 2022). The intention is to reduce waiting times, occurrences of fraud, and ease of access to services for ex-service personnel (ibid.). To this effect, the OVA committed to delivering "Veterans' ID Cards", which will be provided to service leavers who left the Armed Forces before December 2018[10]. This has the potential to aid identification of ex-service personnel in the justice system as well.

[8] Source: IOM Cymru. Accessed October 2023: https://www.iomcymru.org.uk/ExArmed-Service-Personnel/

[9] Source: Armed Forces Covenant Fund. Accessed October 2023: https://covenantfund.org.uk/programme/ex-forces-in-the-criminal-justice-system-programme-2/

[10] Source: Ministry of Defence and Office for Veterans' Affairs. Accessed February 2024: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hm-armed-forces-veteran-cards-will-officially-launch-in-the-new-year-following-a-successful-assessment-from-the-central-digital-and-data-office

In March 2021, NHS England launched Op COURAGE, a mental health specialist service for serving personnel due to leave the military as well as ex-service personnel and their families[11]. The service involves Armed Forces charities including through training of NHS staff on understanding the lived experiences of ex-service personnel in their care. The service also includes a "high intensity treatment" designed to treat ex-service personnel with complex mental health problems. An evaluation of the treatment pilot by Finnegan, et. al, (2023) concluded that the 'High Intensity Service' (HIS) provides social support before mental health support treatments, leading to a holistic support model that improved engagement with the service. Additionally, some service provider participants who were ex-service personnel themselves highlighted that their lived experience helped build more trusting relationships with ex-service personnel being referred into the service (ibid.)

In addition to this, NHS England is planning to provide £18 million over three years for veteran health services, which includes building on veterans' support within the CJS (Office for Veterans' Affairs, 2022). As we were undertaking this research, NHS England, in April 2023, commissioned Op NOVA, delivered by the Forces Employment Charity, to "build on existing provision to improve identification of veterans pre and post-prison custody"[12]. Launched in 2014, Project Nova, as it was originally called, began as a collaboration between Walking with the Wounded and Forces Employment Charity, with the specific aim of supporting ex-service personnel who have been arrested or were at risk of arrest[13]. Op NOVA has now expanded to support ex-service personnel at different stages of the CJS and is delivered by Forces Employment Charity with Care After Combat subcontracted to work with ex-service personnel in prison to support at the point of release.

Op NOVA also refers ex-service personnel in their care to Op COURAGE, providing a link between those having contact with the criminal justice system and specialist mental health services.

In Wales, "Veterans' NHS Wales" is a priority NHS service for ex-service personnel, for which each local health board should have an appointed clinician experienced in issues specific to ex-service personnel[14]. In 2020, the Welsh Government committed to ensuring mental health providers such as Veterans NHS Wales engage with ex-service personnel in prison prior to release (Welsh Government, 2020). In Scotland, Veterans First Point (V1P) is a support provider for ex-service personnel, and is delivered as part of NHS Scotland, in collaboration with third sector and statutory bodies[15]. An evaluation of V1P found that it receives a small but significant number of referrals from prisons (Fitzpatrick, McArdle, & Gall, 2020), however, it was not clear in the evaluation to what extent V1P has links with the CJS.

With regards to prisons, HMPPS recognised the importance of recording ex-service personnel within custody, and from January 2015, a question was included in the Basic Custody Screening interview for people as they entered prison in England and Wales, asking whether the person has served in the Armed Forces. Moreover, in 2021, following the plans for the reunification of probation, HMPPS published "The Target Operating Model for probation services in England and Wales" (2021), which identified ex-service personnel as a cohort "requiring tailored services", highlighting the need to support this cohort in the community.

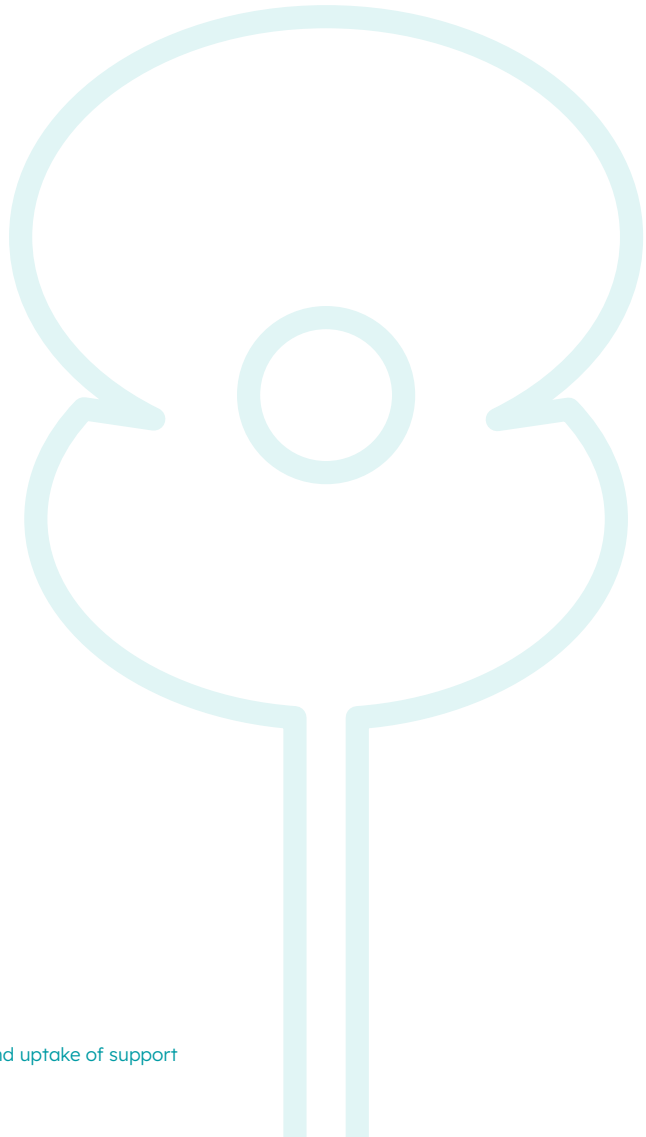
[11] Source: NHS England. Accessed October 2023: https://www.england.nhs.uk/2021/03/nhs-launches-op-courage-veterans-mental-health-service/
[12] Source: Cobseo. Accessed October 2023: https://www.cobseo.org.uk/op-nova-delivered-by-the-forces-employment-charity/
[13] Source: Walking with the Wounded. Accessed October 2023: https://walkingwiththewounded.org.uk/Home/Programmes/16
[14] Source: Veterans Wales. Accessed October 2023: https://www.veteranswales.co.uk/veterans
[15] Source: Veterans First Point. Accessed October 2023: https://www.veteransfirstpoint.org.uk/about-us

While it was not evident in existing literature if the question is asked as part of basic custody screening, all Scottish prisons have implemented the ViCS scheme, with ViCSOs advertising support available in prisons through word of mouth and posters, encouraging unidentified ex-service personnel to come forward (Scottish Government, 2016). In January 2020, the Scottish Government published its action plan for taking the 'Veterans Strategy' forward in Scotland. However, recognising the impact of the Covid pandemic, the Scottish Government refreshed the action plan in 2022 to review the commitments and determine what had been delivered, the extent to which the original commitments remained valid and whether more detail needed to be added or new commitments made (Scottish Government, 2022). A summary of the commitments in the action plan, with specific regard to supporting veterans to have the 'resilience and awareness to remain law-abiding civilians', is provided below:

- Engaging with the network of ViCSOs to review the support for ex-service personnel within Scotland's prison estate.
- Considering what specific research might provide a better understanding of the ex-service prison population in Scotland.
- Supporting the SPS to encourage ex-service personnel to socialise in the prison community, through initiatives such as breakfast clubs which were impacted by Covid-19.
- Supporting Sacro's work to create safer and more cohesive communities across Scotland, by helping ensure that their support for ex-service personnel is understood by the relevant agencies.
- Support Police Scotland's pledges under the Armed Forces Covenant to support the Armed Forces and ex-service personnel community, including its review and refresh of the veterans' champion role across local policing divisions and the introduction of veterans' champions within its custody and criminal justice environment.

2.5 Summary

This review of existing research demonstrates that there are likely a number of factors that are impacting an ex-service personnel's life course, and for the purposes of this research, their offending behaviour. The research highlights a number of barriers to the identification of ex-service personnel in the CJS, in addition to the barriers they face in accessing and asking for help. This review also highlights that there have been significant and recent developments in practice in this space. This provides important context for the primary research undertaken for this project across England, Wales and Scotland which the following chapters will detail.



3. Approach

This research was commissioned to address a current gap in knowledge about barriers to identification of ex-service personnel at each stage in the CJS, as well as barriers to take-up of support by ex-service personnel and their families. Increasing knowledge in this area will enable policymakers and service deliverers to better identify and meet the needs of this group, with the intention of reducing the likelihood of ex-service personnel entering the CJS or reoffending.

The two main aims of the project were to:

1. Review the current processes and mechanisms in place for identifying ex-service personnel within the CJS of England, Wales and Scotland, identify any shortcomings, and make practical recommendations on how identification could be improved

2. Examine the barriers to uptake of support for both ex-service personnel in the CJS and their families and make appropriate recommendations.

A multi-methods approach, using qualitative semi-structured interviews and surveys (with both qualitative and quantitative questions), was adopted. Interviews were used to ensure that in-depth information could be obtained from professionals and ex-service personnel about their perceptions and experiences of identification and support. The interviews were semi-structured to allow flexibility for the researcher to delve more deeply into topics that were particularly relevant to the interviewee as well as to increase the ability of the researcher to adapt to the respondents' experiences given the context of the interviews.

An online survey was used as part of the work with key stakeholders to maximise data collection as the project was across three nations and involved many different stakeholders and services. The link to the survey was promoted to several organisations with the intention for stakeholders to be able to share it with their peers. However, the responses to the survey were not evenly distributed enough for the team to be able to draw significant quantitative conclusions. The qualitative findings of the survey have been presented in this report.

The project was organised into two phases which will be described in more detail below. Both phases of the project were reviewed and approved by HMPPS Research Ethics Committee and the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) Research Ethics Committee, as well as the University of Northampton's Research Ethics Committee.

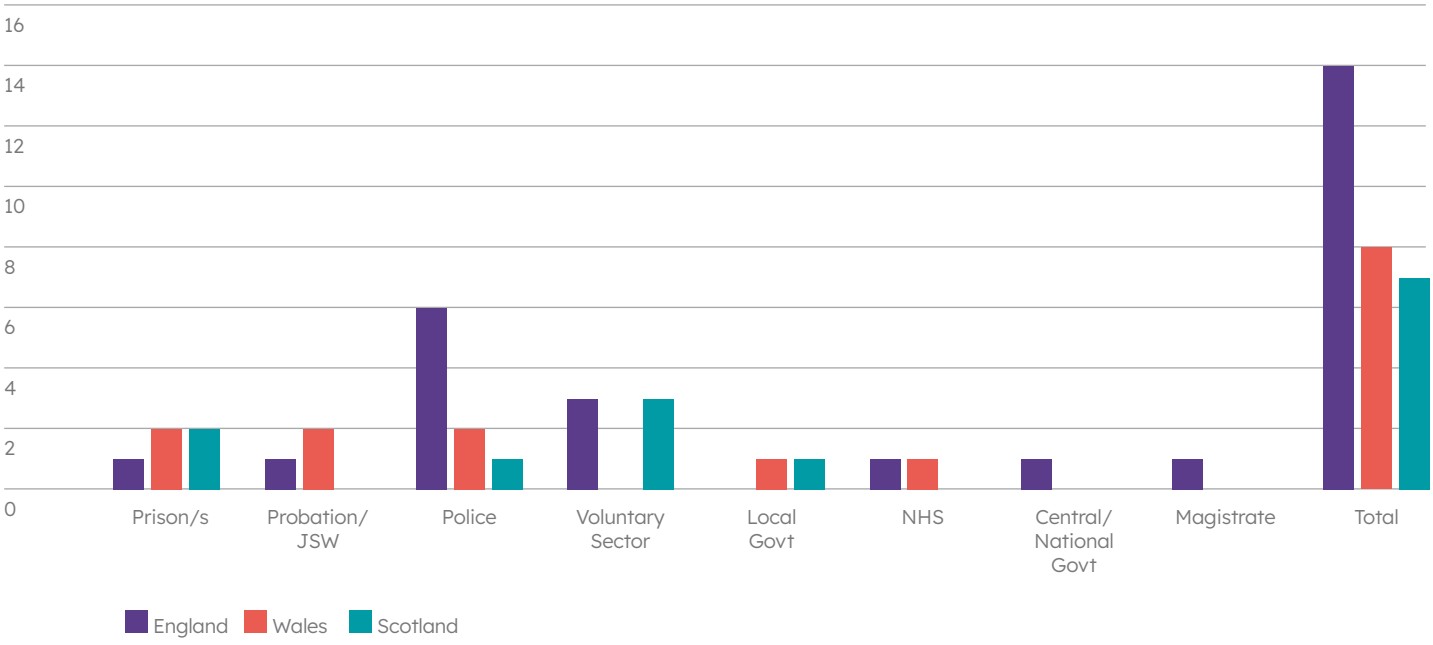
3.1 Phase 1: National stakeholder perspectives

Phase 1 of the project involved research with national stakeholder representatives in England, Wales and Scotland to scope key issues and themes relating to ex-service personnel who come into contact with the CJS. This was achieved by first promoting an online survey to leads within national organisations that work with ex-service personnel. The survey asked key stakeholders about their knowledge of and their views towards the current processes and mechanisms in place for identifying and supporting ex-service personnel at each stage during the criminal justice system of England, Wales and Scotland. It also asked what could be improved. The survey is provided in Appendix B. The online survey allowed for the research team to understand the broad experiences of stakeholders and incorporate those experiences into the findings from the semi-structured interviews which were conducted in Phase 1 as well as Phase 2. A total of 24 stakeholders completed the survey on behalf of their organisations, where 18 worked for organisations within England and six for organisations within Scotland.

The survey response was more limited than the research team anticipated, therefore the semi-structured interviews, which were conducted after this activity, helped produce richer data which are incorporated into the findings of this report. The findings of the survey are provided in Appendix A.1.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 29 stakeholders from a range of sectors and organisations. The purpose of the interviews was to get a much more in-depth understanding of barriers to identification and support than gained in the survey from the perspective of key stakeholders from the different organisations involved across the three nations. Of those interviews, 14 were conducted with individuals whose roles were based in England, eight in Wales, and seven interviews were conducted with professionals working in or with the Scottish CJS. As Figure 3.1 shows below, the sample had coverage across different organisations, though it is acknowledged the sample has gaps within organisations nationally and that a higher proportion of individuals participated from the police. The participation of representatives from within each nation is summarised below.

Figure 3.1: Breakdown of National Interviews by Country and Organisation



3.2 Phase 2: Interviews of on-the-ground stakeholders and ex-service personnel in selected sites

The purpose of Phase 1, of the project was to gain a broad overview of the systems in place for identification and support of ex-service personnel in the CJS and barriers to identification and support. The aim of Phase 2 was to gain a much more in-depth understanding as to how these systems and barriers may differ, or be similar, in different localities. Therefore, within the second phase, fieldwork was conducted in eight local research sites across England, Wales and Scotland, specifically:

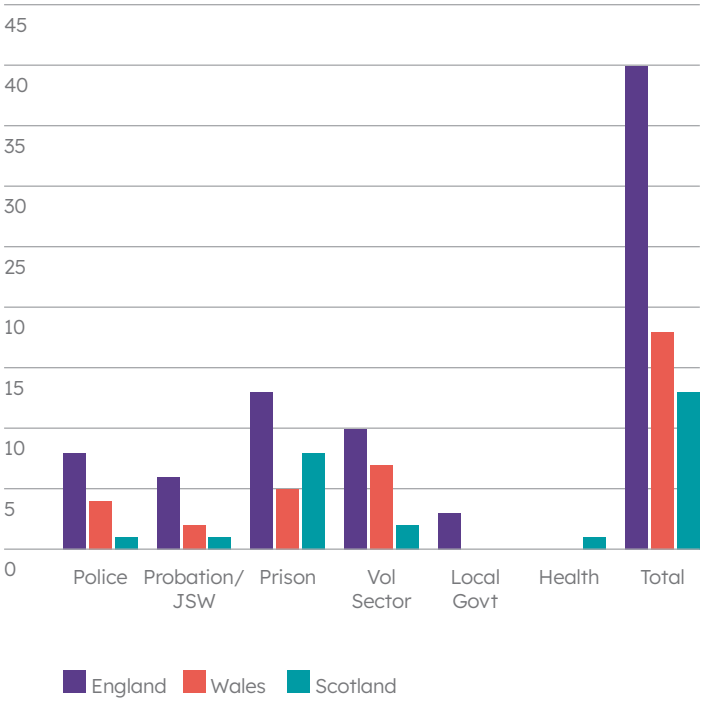
- Perth and Kinross, and Edinburgh in Scotland, with a supplementary prison visit in Stirling.
- Bridgend and Swansea in Wales; and
- Plymouth, Hull, County Durham and Staffordshire in England.

The sites were selected to cover all three Armed Forces service branches (British Army, Royal Air Force, Royal Navy), and to provide a blend of areas with high and low concentrations of ex-service personnel. These sites were also representative of a mix of urban and rural regions. A final selection criterion was based on the recommendations of the project's steering group. Within these sites, a range of ex-service personnel were interviewed. These were supplemented by interviews with local stakeholders, including the police, probation, justice social work (JSW) (Scotland), voluntary sector, and prison staff. A survey with key stakeholders was not used in this phase of the project because it was felt that it would not provide the depth of information required and resource was better used identifying and interviewing the relevant stakeholders in each locality. All interviewees were consulted as to how ex-service personnel are identified in their local area, what services exist and any identified gaps within the local provision of support. Interview schedules were used and are contained within Appendix B.2 and B.3. These were devised by the research team based on the research questions, findings from Phase 1 surveys and interviews, and scoping of existing literature. The schedules were reviewed by the steering group to sense-check the nuance of the questions.

3.2.1: Local stakeholder interviews

In total, 71 interviews were conducted with key stakeholders as part of the local phase of the research with 40 occurring in England, 18 in Scotland and 13 in Wales. See figure 3.2 for the breakdown of interviews by country and organisation.

Figure 3.2: Breakdown of stakeholder interviews by country and organisation



It is important to note that participation in the interview was voluntary, so, in certain cases, those who were considered relevant to participate did not respond to the invitation or subsequent reminders.

3.2.2 Ex-service personnel interviews

Within each local area, ex-service personnel in contact with the CJS were recruited in prisons (with identified ex-service personnel populations) as well as in the community under supervision of probation and JSW (Scotland). The prisons visited were:

- HMP Castle Huntly, HMP Glenochil[16] and HMP Edinburgh in Scotland.
- HMP and YOI Parc and HMP Swansea in Wales; and
- HMP Stafford, HMP Holme House, HMP Hull, HMP Durham, HMP Dartmoor and HMP Exeter in England.

All of the establishments visited for this research housed male offenders. One women's establishment was contacted for this research, however, we did not receive a response from the establishment after repeated invitations to participate. With the selection of participants, the research team sought to engage with individuals who were at different stages of the CJS, specifically those in custody, those under supervision, and those in the community who have had experience with the CJS in the past or were serving a community order. Recruitment of participants took place through extensive networking in the eight local sites. Probation, social work and prison staff were asked to provide those identified as ex-service personnel who were interested in participating with a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) (Appendix B.1) explaining the project and accompanying consent form.

The content of the PIS was also read to participants at the start of the interview to ensure that they understood and were happy to participate before the consent form was signed. Probation, JSW, and third sector staff requested to identify ex-service personnel at the time were not working with female ex-service personnel, therefore we were unable to interview female ex-service personnel in the community. Therefore, all ex-service personnel interviewed were male. The interviews were semi-structured so the researcher could be flexible with the interview schedule depending on the experiences of the interviewee and also flexible to the environment. For example, in prison, the time available to interview each participant could vary. Interviews with those in prison were conducted in person by members of the research team. One-on-one interviews were conducted with ex-service personnel in locations within the prison that could provide privacy but also adhere to the establishment's safeguarding protocols. Interviews with those on probation were conducted over the phone. The aim was to conduct a high number of interviews with ex-service personnel taking into consideration their varying experiences before joining the Armed Forces, during their service, and post-transition from the Armed Forces, and events and experiences leading up to their contact with the CJS. Finally, the research team sought to interview participants at different stages of the CJS and across a number of different localities. In total, 104 interviews were conducted with ex-service personnel, with 61 interviews in England, 18 in Wales and 25 in Scotland. Recruitment of those in prison was more successful than recruitment in community settings, with 94 interviews with ex-service personnel in prison, conducted between June 2022 and January 2023.

[16] It should be noted that HMP Glenochil sits outside the recognised case study sites but was included based on recommendations from Phase 1.

Appendix A.2.2 provides the coverage of this sample in deeper detail. Broadly, the characteristics of those who were interviewed are as follows:

- Most individuals interviewed had served in the Army with smaller proportions having served in the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force.

87

Army

12

Royal Navy

7

Royal Air Force

- The most common self-reported offence type within the sample was sexual offending (40, 38%) which contained a range of offences including rape and inappropriate communication with or viewing images of children online. The second most common self-reported offence type was those involving violence against the person (21, 20%) which ranges in severity from murder to actual bodily harm, followed by drug offences (12, 12%). It should be noted for 15% (16) of cases the offence type was not declared.
- Over a third of the sample had served less than 5 years in the Armed Forces (37), a similar proportion had served 5<10 years (41) and the remaining quarter had served 10 years or above (26).
- At the time of the interviews, only 8% (8) had left the Armed Forces less than 5 years ago; 8% (8) had left more than five but less than 10 years ago; 17% (18) had been out of the Armed Forces between ten to 15 years; and two thirds (69, 67%) had left the Armed Forces over 15 years ago. Finally, 27% (28) had left the Armed Forces over 30 years ago.
- In 12 (12%) of cases it was not clear or not recorded as to whether the ex-service personnel considered themselves to suffer from mental health issues. Of those remaining, 55 (60%) said that they have or did have mental health issues. 19 (21%) referenced PTSD - in some cases this was said to be directly due to service in the Armed Forces whereas some experienced complex PTSD which they felt was influenced by their experiences before joining the Armed Forces. It should be noted that there was no specific question on mental health so this information is based on spontaneous information provided by ex-service personnel in their interviews whilst telling their stories.
- All interviewees were male.

3.2.3 Family case studies

The research team also aimed to recruit five family members at each of the eight separate research sites (40 family members in total), ensuring a cross-section of families, rather than a traditional nuclear family, where possible. The aim of working with families was to understand how they were impacted by their family member's journey through the criminal justice system and identify any gaps in service provision or support provided to the wider family.

The research team sought to recruit family members primarily through services within the eight local research sites that work with ex-service personnel and/or their families. Unfortunately, there were few family members identified, with those identified reluctant to participate in the research. Therefore, the research team tried to increase participation by creating an online survey, as although many voluntary organisations were willing to help try and recruit families it was difficult for them to facilitate interviews. In addition, an online campaign advertising the opportunity to families was launched by Nacro along with the online survey which was distributed over social media via Twitter and LinkedIn. The survey was promoted within organisations whose staff were already aware of the research, through prison staff, as well as probation staff. However, there were only two responses to the survey, one of which was by an ex-service person who had agreed to be interviewed. They were interviewed as an ex-service person in the community and not as a family member as they were relaying their own experiences in the CJS. Despite a variety of efforts to recruit families, attempts were unfortunately unsuccessful with only one family member completing the survey.

Therefore, in the absence of direct consultation with family members, potential barriers to identification and support for families are considered through the perceptions and experiences of key stakeholders and ex-service personnel.

It is important to note that few of the ex-service personnel talked about seeking support for their family. In 17 interviews family support was not discussed, however, of those remaining only 10% (9) had sought support for a family member or a family member had received support.

3.3 Analysis

Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim to enable a rich and reliable interpretation of the data. The interviews were then entered into the qualitative data analysis package, QSR NVivo.

A thematic analysis was conducted based on the six phases of Braun and Clarke (2020) which involve 1. data familiarisation, 2. systematic data coding, 3. generating initial themes from coded and collated data, 4. developing and reviewing themes, 5. refining, defining and naming themes and 6. writing the report. This approach was appropriate for this study as it can be used for research topics that necessitate the description of lived experience and/or factors that influence and contextualise experiences ((Braun & Clarke, 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2020).

Within NVivo, three researchers transcribed three sample transcripts each and created nodes for each stage of the process creating an analytical framework with five core topics, which were 'contact with the CJS', 'experiences in custody', 'experiences in the community and/or post-custody', 'third sector support', and 'families' (Figure 3.3). Within these nodes were sub-nodes to code data that highlighted barriers and enablers to identification and to accessing support to answer the two key questions of the research.

Figure 3.3: Analytical framework

The researchers then divided all the transcripts between them and coded the relevant parts of the transcripts into the relevant nodes, meeting on a regular basis to discuss what they were categorizing into each node and sub-node to ensure that there was a shared understanding of meaning. Once all the data had been coded into the nodes the three researchers then led on particular areas of the analytical framework and started identifying within the topics comments that highlighted barriers and enablers to identification and support at each stage in the CJS. The researchers adopted semantic coding, which is coding on the basis of the explicit meaning of what respondents have said rather than latent coding which also aims to identify hidden meaning or underlying assumptions ideas or ideologies.

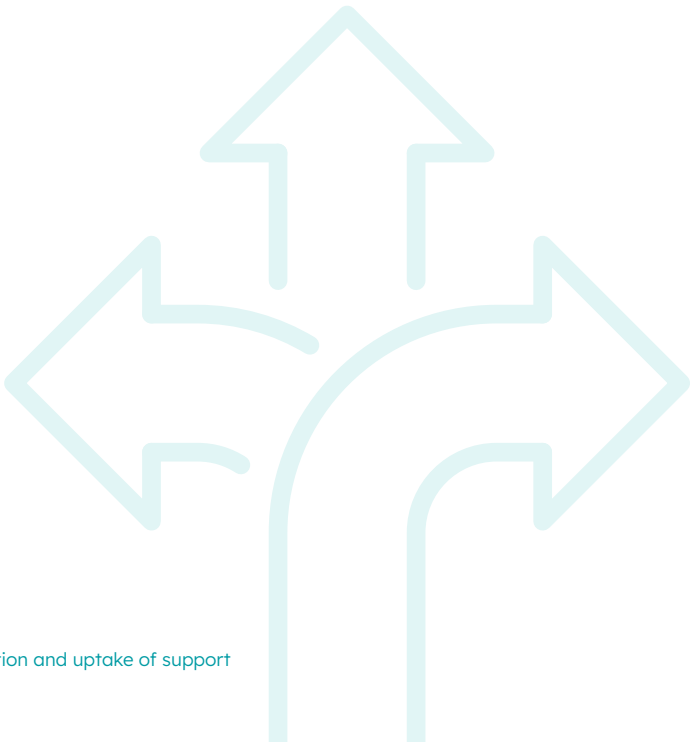
The researchers took a data-driven inductive approach so as not to apply pre-existing conceptions of what barriers and enablers there might be within each stage to identify themes. All researchers met to discuss key themes in each stage and ensure that there was agreement on the validity of each theme and the extent to which that theme was or was not prevalent across different stages of the system. These themes were then presented to the wider research team to provide further critical analysis of the themes and discuss how they emulate or differ from previous research findings in this area.

3.4 Limitations

There are some limitations to be noted with the findings of this report.

- The stakeholder sample achieved is not equally balanced across the three national contexts nor are representations of organisations in the local sites. The participation of key individuals was affected by their availability, as well as organisational pressures.
- Stakeholders assisted the research team to recruit ex-service personnel for this research. Therefore, nearly all ex-service personnel interviewed for this research had already identified themselves as ex-service personnel to institutional stakeholders such as prison, probation, or third sector staff. This implies that the team was unable to interview those who had never identified themselves as ex-service personnel, however many of those who were interviewed had previously not identified themselves.
- Following significant and sustained efforts to engage families to explore their experiences and perspectives, very few individuals participated in the study. The main reasons cited for lack of engagement from families included a breakdown in family relationships, making it difficult to recruit family members through formal channels and agencies that work closely with ex-service personnel.
- Reaching ex-service personnel in the community who had previously encountered the CJS was extremely difficult. This is largely reflective of the limitations that different organisations experience when trying to maintain sustained contact with ex-service personnel, a limitation this report will explore further in Chapter 8.
- Ex-service personnel who were interviewed for this research had all identified themselves at some point, and therefore the barriers to identification and support listed throughout this report are based on their recollections of what prevented them on initially identifying themselves, in addition to stakeholder experiences of barriers to identification.

Overall this project provides a significant evidence-base from which to improve the identification and support provided to ex-service personnel and their families. Importantly, the accounts of ex-service personnel who have experienced the CJS are included throughout, giving voice to an often-overlooked subset of the ex-service personnel community. The overall sample of ex-service personnel who have encountered the CJS is arguably the largest to have engaged in an in-depth study of this population in recent years. With these limitations in mind, the following chapters will detail the findings of the research.



4

Police and Courts

4. Contact with the CJS: Police and courts

The Howard League for Penal Reform in 2011 noted that a considerable amount of time can pass from an individual leaving the Armed Forces to involvement in the CJS. Understanding the early life, or life course, of ex-service personnel is valuable in identifying experiences in the Armed Forces and transition to civilian life (Carr, *et al.*, 2019; Hardy & Reyes, 2016; Kang, *et al.*, 2016). A life course perspective enables a richer understanding of the multiple factors shaping an individual's life (ibid). Throughout the course of this research, ex-service personnel shared their early life experiences, reasons for joining the Armed Forces and their experiences of serving and transitioning out of the Armed Forces. Some of the key issues we heard in early life that impacted on the life course of ex-service personnel include childhood experience resulting in trauma, criminal activity before joining the Armed Forces and motivation for joining the Armed Forces. Early life experiences are significant in shaping future trajectories into the Armed Forces, and then transitions into the community. Furthermore, Murray *et al.* (2022) have found that regret of leaving the Armed Forces, alcohol and substance misuse, and underlying mental health needs also play important roles that influence offending behaviours of ex-service personnel, a finding which was reflected by those interviewed for our research.

This report will begin by exploring the identification and support when ex-service personnel come into contact with the police. Interaction with the police is likely to be the first instance of involvement with the CJS. Although arrest could result in no further action or an out of court disposal, it can often lead to a judicial process. If convicted at court, an individual could receive a community sentence or be sentenced to time in prison. Section 4.1 provides a brief summary of identification procedures and support during contact with the police, and barriers. Section 4.2 will then proceed to detail identification and support in the court system.

4.1 Identification and support mechanisms in police custody

Police personnel interact with the general public in a myriad of ways. This creates multiple opportunities for identification, which this chapter will explore through the experiences of ex-service personnel and police stakeholders. It is important to note that this project aims to accurately convey the lived experiences of all the ex-service personnel interviewed. Not all ex-service personnel experienced the processes and support mechanisms relayed by the stakeholders interviewed. This is to be expected, as a wide range of ex-service personnel were interviewed, some of whom had been in contact with the police at a time before support pathways were set up. The structure of this chapter aims to first establish existing institutional mechanisms to aid identification and support of ex-service personnel in a policing context. After this, practical lived experiences of these mechanisms, largely drawn from Phase 2 of the project, will be relayed.

4.1.1 Stakeholder experiences of identification

All police stakeholders interviewed across the three nations affirmed that people coming into police custody are asked if they have previously served in the Armed Forces either as a regular or a reservist.

In addition to the formal identification questions, police stakeholders interviewed during both phases of the research recognised there were challenges of identification and specified the different ways they attempt to create an environment where ex-service personnel are encouraged to self-identify. For example, we heard of explicit 'think veteran' approaches which included training and looking out for and recognising signs of Armed Forces experience. Some participants shared that officers are able to recognise certain signs, including those related to trauma, stress and mental health problems. It was suggested that this approach would be helpful more broadly. Frontline police officers could be trained to recognise signs which may lead to asking insightful, searching questions to help with identification. Being able to recognise potential signs of former service status was mentioned by several research participants within our national interviews as being helpful and important.

> ***"What we've noticed, and I think this was what we noticed within the SToMP meetings, very few veterans are identified in custody because I think a lot of them don't let custody staff know that they've been in the military. There are pointers that custody staff are aware of - rightly or wrongly they look, maybe, for a tattoo, something like that; the age, their background."***

(Interview No 26, Police, Wales, Phase 1)

> ***"The obvious signs are things like tattoos; speaking phonetically [using the phonetic alphabet]; referring to rank, standing to attention. Or the more worrying signs of sitting with their back to the wall in a corner so, they can see all around them."***

(Interview No 23, Police, England, Phase 1)

Several participants talked about rapport and trust that police officers with previous experience in the Armed Forces can build, as they are able to 'speak the same language' as ex-service personnel who have come into contact with the CJS.

> ***"So, we also see a number of ex-service personnel who work in custody so…if someone has said on their risk assessment they were part of the Armed Forces but they don't want to be referred, quite a lot of the time if one of these ex-service personnel is working in custody they will… either go and see the person or ring up through to the cell… Ex-service personnel seem to have a way of speaking to each other, they know the right thing to say because they've got lived experiences I suppose. So, they are much better at selling the service."***

(Interview No 11, Police, England, Phase 1)

> ***"We have in custody over time quite a few people who work for us that are ex-services and you do find that there's a relationship there, a professional relationship, even though they've never worked together. They are ex-services, they have – it's difficult to describe – an understanding of where they've both been in different services. Sometimes I've found that helps in just sometimes calming people down."***

(Interview No 4, Police, England, Phase 2)

The importance of wearing badges that signified they, themselves, were ex-service personnel was also highlighted by several participants. It was recognised that wearing a badge may not succeed in diffusing tensions and lead to self-identification in every case but, as a stakeholder mentioned below, it can create a conversation.

"The other thing is badges. They use the veterans' badge… the little MoD with 'Veteran' written underneath it. I wear that on my police stab vest and when I talk to people… I've been to situations where there are veterans who are having a mental health breakdown…when they see the badge, their demeanour changes. The aggression can really ebb out of them and it starts a dialogue."

(Interview No 15, Police, England, Phase 1)

Displaying signs of support for ex-service personnel was indicated as being valuable to encourage individuals to disclose their ex-service status. As outlined above, this may not be sufficient by itself to encourage ex-service personnel to self-identify, however, visual signage and posters may create an environment conducive to identification of ex-service personnel and start a conversation. This was affirmed in Phase 2 of the project as well, where some police participants spoke about posters displayed that explain the benefits of disclosure and support available.

"In the holding area when they come in, we've got posters on the wall that identify if you are a member of Her Majesty's Forces … or an ex-member of Her Majesty's Forces - speak to staff and they will signpost you."

(Interview No 2, Police, Scotland, Phase 2)"

"There's definitely posters in the custody areas around Operation Nova. There wouldn't be leaflets and things. However, there would be an option to hand those out post disposal."

(Interview No 1, Police, England, Phase 2)

Police training and awareness raising were also highlighted as another method to bolster identification of ex-service personnel. One participant described how representatives from organisations that work with ex-service personnel provided inputs into training to raise awareness of the support needs of ex-service personnel. However, it is unclear the extent to which this is reflected across all police forces.

"[Name] from Project Nova now goes in with the new recruits… an hour or two's input with them towards the latter end of their training, so, it's fresh in their minds so when they come out they can help and support…"

(Interview No 13, Police, England, Phase 1)

The staff of one police force we interviewed spoke of how the force has developed external relationships with the Armed Forces and services that work with ex-service personnel to support the training of and share subject matter expertise with new policing recruits. Their aim is to make new recruits aware that their local police force supports ex-service personnel when they are serving locally and transitioning to the local area, including those who come into contact with the CJS.

Reference was also made to some police forces working closely with the Armed Forces Career Transition Partnership and the Forces Employment Charity (FEC) to attract service leavers into the police. For example, Greater Manchester Police was described as *"…very much a forces friendly organisation"* (Interview No 23, Police, England, Phase 1), trying to attract service leavers into the force whilst, simultaneously, helping those who are at risk of coming into contact with, or already in contact with, the CJS.

All police representatives in England discussed the importance of Armed Forces networks actively disseminating information about either recruiting or supporting ex-service personnel throughout their respective local police forces. In some police forces, this led to large numbers of ex-service personnel working as police officers, which was interpreted positively. It was suggested that the force would then be more likely to think of ex-service personnel when dealing with the public and attending police incidents, whilst also understanding the importance of identification and support. For example, one police force highlighted that significant numbers of ex-service personnel were amongst its ranks and, as a consequence, the subject of ex-service personnel was prominent within training provided to staff.

"But if you build your internal network of people that are from that background [ex-services] and they realise the force values them and they come together and you share information with them and you encourage them to spread the word locally, they will do that in their own areas. They will then generate the boots on the ground to actually do more in terms of supporting veterans in the community because it won't be that one PowerPoint they've seen."

(Interview No 26, Police, England, Phase 1)

Reference was made to the importance of awareness of ex-service personnel by community police in order to identify and address vulnerabilities, support needs and early interventions away from the CJS. Police Scotland like many police forces across England and Wales, for example, have signed the Armed Forces Covenant, pledging to not discriminate against ex-service personnel, supporting and enabling them wherever possible.

"…and our Chief Constable signed an agreement to help veterans wherever they can and it's through that support network that we're trying to offer greater assistance."

(Interview No 24, Police, Scotland, Phase 1)

The importance of actively investing effort into developing networks and awareness of ex-service personnel was identified in the analysis. It was suggested by participants in Scotland that the strength and depth of networks in England and Wales were more advanced and stronger compared to Scotland. Although differences were noted in the relative strengths of networks in different national settings, creating the right conditions to encourage disclosure was identified in all nations as being critical to enabling referrals to support.

"And I think the police veterans' champion network is very, very good in England. In Scotland, it's not as well established.'

(Interview No 6, Voluntary Sector, Scotland, Phase 1)

"But if I'm perfectly honest, we don't seem to have referrals through to a veterans' service and I don't really know why. I think a lot of it is that they don't disclose when they present in custody."

(Interview No 26, Police, Wales, Phase 1)

In England and Wales, Liaison and Diversion (L&D) services are a further potential point of identification at police custody. Every police custody suite in England should have an L&D practitioner or team on site seven days a week, whose hours are normally negotiated with the local force depending on the volume of cases in the police custody suites. L&D practitioners identify vulnerabilities, help divert people to the support they need, and try to prevent them from progressing further through the CJS. At the time of the interview, it was expressed that the service is reliant on receiving referrals; about one in five people in police custody suites see L&D practitioners.

It was reported that most L&D services have 'veterans' champions' within the service. At first point of contact the police are still expected to identify ex-service personnel, but, if someone has been referred to L&D and has not been identified yet, the practitioners will ask about service history.

Interview respondents told us that the question is asked in an "appropriate way", as their approach varies depending on the individual person. This can include collecting pieces of information that can help point to their ex-service personnel history.

Some police stakeholders commented that a benefit of L&D teams is they are distinct from the police, and ex-service personnel may be more receptive to seeking help from them.

"Yeah, again sometimes, the nature of our role, they are - you know - not as often as you would think, but they're a little bit anti police and you may find that suggestion or that recommendation coming from an NHS worker, they're more likely to be receptive to it."

(Interview No 6, Police, England, Phase 2)

In Scotland, diversion from prosecution is defined as a "process by which the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) are able to refer a case to social work – and their partners – as a means of addressing the underlying causes of alleged offending when this is deemed the most appropriate course of action" (Community Justice Scotland, 2020, p. 3). One stakeholder who was interviewed conducts diversion from prosecution assessments, and told us that information from the police identifying service status can be passed over to them through the police report as part of the diversion process and assessment.

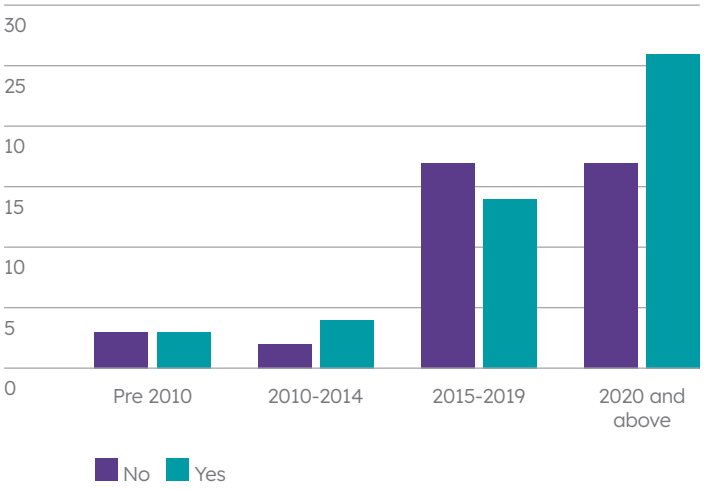
"Sometimes when we get diversion from prosecution, in the body of the report sometimes it will mention that they are an ex-veteran and they are struggling. The police throughout the conversation with the person, might identify themselves as being a veteran but that's really the only reason it's come to my attention before, in diversion from prosecution."

(Interview No 5, Scotland, JSW, Phase 2)

4.2 Barriers to identification in police custody

Interviews with both stakeholders and ex-service personnel highlighted that identification in police custody could be improved. Of the ex-service personnel interviewed, 51% said that they were asked by the police if they had served in the Armed Forces; 44% said they had not and 5% could not remember or were unsure. An important caveat to note here is that many of the ex-service personnel had been arrested several years prior to being interviewed, which may impact their recollection of the questions they were asked in police custody and may also be reflective of evolving practice. Figure 4.1 illustrates the proportion of individuals interviewed who said they were or were not asked about their ex-service history by the police. From 2020, more ex-service personnel recalled being asked the question with respect to their service history, with most of these self-disclosures occurring from 2021 onward[17].

Figure 4.1 Proportion of Participants who were asked by Police if they were Ex-Service Personnel



The barriers discussed here are predominantly institutional barriers which emerged from the operations of different police forces.

[17] It is possible that the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted routine questioning exercises within police custody suites.

4.2.1 Nature of police custody and the timing of the question

As set out above, all police stakeholders interviewed in both phases of the project affirmed that those coming into police custody suites are asked whether they have served in the Armed Forces as part of a wider question set. Participants shared that time pressures in police custody suites to process individuals in addition to the nature of police custody being a difficult environment for the individuals themselves may deter ex-service personnel from opening up about their service history.

"...ultimately the custody sergeants, you've got lots of people coming through if it's your busy time, if you can't add that context to the situation."

(Interview No 6, Police, England, Phase 2)

"They are stood there in a custody office with a sergeant who's looking down on them physically, because that's how it's set up, the floor, and probably a detention officer stood alongside and undoubtedly one, if not two, arresting officers with them so, you've probably got four people and loads of CCTV cameras and that individual. Probably not the best environment to get somebody to open up and explain. So, then no matter how hard the sergeant will ask, because they have to, to try and do the risk assessment if nothing else, that's a difficult environment for anybody to open up in."

(Interview No 4, Police, England, Phase 2)

It was highlighted by some stakeholders that it is possible the question is being asked too early as individuals are likely to have heightened emotions when arriving in police custody, and that asking at a later stage can help improve identification.

"Sometimes they get asked the question a bit too early in the process; they are still a bit angry, they are still annoyed that they've been arrested. But once they've been in the cell for a period of time and I go in and offer a little bit more sage advice and a cup of tea, most times I get a different response."

(Interview No 2, Police, Scotland, Phase 2)

"If, for example, the person who has been arrested says no, but five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten hours later they go, 'Actually yes, I'm ex-navy, I didn't say yes at the start because I was embarrassed', or, 'I just didn't want to, I wasn't in the right state of mind', equally that avenue is not closed. We can reopen it and we can refer into Nova as well at that opportunity. All the custody sites we have, have literature about it as well. So, that's another option, you don't have to go yes first of all, it's not a closed door if you go no."

(Interview No 4, Police, England, Phase 2)

4.2.2 Distrust and perceived motivations of the police

Although this is not uniform across all areas, some ex-service personnel interviewed expressed distrust of the police, making them reticent to answer questions about their service history.

"If you've been in the criminal justice system you know the police are the biggest scum on the earth. They do not care about stuff like that, they are interested in arresting you and that's it."

(Interview No 1, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)

"I hate the police with a passion and I hate social workers as well with a passion and yet I've got to deal with those people."

(Interview No 2, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"My personal opinion, and a lot of the veterans I speak to, will say the police have got something against ex-military boys. They know we've got mental health issues and we're an easy target."

(Interview No 3, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)

It is important to caveat that in locations with high ex-service personnel populations, such as Plymouth, some ex-service personnel had more positive experiences with the police. Many of our interview respondents in Plymouth and surrounding areas mentioned that many in those areas are former service personnel, and many ex-service personnel choose a career in the police after their service, which may explain the better relationships some ex-service personnel had with police officers.

"They treated me with complete respect. I was at the door, waiting for them anyway and I invited them in... [after being taken into custody] They got me on the phone to Samaritans, which is their duty of care to me mentally. They got me to see a mental health nurse because I was in a lot of stress."

(Interview No 10, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

In addition to some interviewees expressing distrust of the police, a number of ex-service personnel also felt that the asking of the question by the police felt like a 'tick-box' exercise, that the question was only being asked as part of routine questioning, with no beneficial consequences to self-identifying.

"Actually, they do, they have a questionnaire and they ask you, 'Have you ever served in the Armed Forces?'. The next one is 'Do you want to harm yourself?' Yes, I think they do ask, they don't really care, they just ask the question."

(Interview No 4, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)

"Yes, basically ticking a box. To me it seemed even if I said no or yes then it wouldn't have made a difference."

(Interview No 5, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"It seems crazy because to me I thought it was just a tick box exercise for them, they have to ask it, but they just ask yes or no so, it's a closed question."

(Interview No 6, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

4.2.3 Purpose of asking the question

Through interviews with stakeholders during the course of the research, a lack of information on why they were being asked was highlighted as a further barrier to identification, compounded by the fear that disclosure could be used against them, or would be reported back to the military. This is a recurring theme that cuts across all stages of the CJS: often, ex-service personnel are not inclined to identify themselves as it is not immediately explained why identification could benefit them. This was also specifically highlighted as an issue in police custody by a healthcare respondent to our Phase 1 survey, and was echoed by stakeholders during the course of the research.

"You have it drilled into you when you are in the military, 'do not bring this organisation into disrepute'. So, if they don't necessarily know - You've got to think of - if [name] is behind a custody desk and he's going through the form and saying, 'Are you or have you been a member of the military?', and [he] then doesn't then go on to say, 'Because if you have, we've got Project Nova here who can support you from a supportive way', they don't know that that is that trigger of 'they are here to help me'. It's not going to be that, it's going to be, 'Oh my God, they are going to go to my CO, they are going to get me - I'm going to be arrested, I'm going to be in Colchester."

(Interview No 6, Police, England, Phase 2)

"… quite often people are reluctant to answer because they think it's going to affect the case that they've been arrested for and then it is explained to them that it's nothing to do with the case you're arrested for. This is so that they can be looked after properly whilst doing custody."

(Interview No 7, Prison, Scotland, Phase 2)

4.2.4 Difficulty in identifying ex-service personnel outside police custody

Many stakeholders reflected that police custody was a key point where ex-service personnel could be effectively identified. However, other opportunities, such as if police officers are called to incidents that do not lead to arrest, were reported to be less likely to be used consistently for identification.

"On the other side, if it's an incident that doesn't lead to an arrest, you are reliant on the police officer asking the question if somebody's a veteran which, depending on the incident, may or may not take place."

(Interview No 8, Police, England, Phase 2)

Some ex-service personnel who were convicted of historic offences shared that they were not taken into police custody. Whilst the police may still have known that they had served in the Armed Forces through their investigations, it is possible this different process may have impacted any referrals.

"No, I never went into police custody."

(Interview No 7, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"No. And I'll tell you another thing, I didn't even get interviewed by the police before I came in here. They said they'd run out of time. I said, 'Am I not going to get allowed-?' I didn't get an interview, I didn't get cautioned, nothing. I phoned up to see if the case was going into - and was told no."

(Interview No 8, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

"… they [the police] had obviously had two years investigating the complaint, that the [two years] were obviously between my ex-wife and her family so, because they will have known I'm an ex-serviceman, they felt that they had all the information that they required to know about me… so they didn't feel that they needed to ask me personally themselves about anything to do with my service or my previous experience with this sort of stuff. So they're not offered that benefit of the doubt, that was already predetermined by the police."

(Interview No 9, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

4.3 Support in police custody

Stakeholders across all three nations identified the importance of referring ex-service personnel to dedicated services. The main areas of support we identified at this stage were through voluntary sector support services. One of the main organisations was Project Nova, which operated across a number of police forces in England providing dedicated support to ex-service personnel. Participants from Police Scotland relayed that upon identification, ex-service personnel are offered a referral to third sector organisations such as Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP) or Poppyscotland.

"So, for the [number] cops we have that are on the front-line. They are told "please ask if they are a veteran. If they've committed a crime refer them to Project Nova. If they haven't committed a crime, direct them to the Veterans' Gateway and that's it. The Veterans' Gateway can be navigated by region or by need and you can signpost to any services that they may need."

(Interview No 23, Police, England, Phase 1)

"I cannot talk about how England's system works but if someone comes to attention [in Scotland], whether it's being arrested or classed as a vulnerable person, they are asked if they a veteran. Then they can be asked if they want their details to be passed on to a certain veterans' agency called ASAP [Armed Services Advice Project]. If they say yes then off it goes."

(Interview No 6, Third Sector, Scotland, Phase 1)

In England and Wales, for those who are identified by L&D services, L&D teams are also able to construct a veterans pathway identifying if there are local services to refer into. Stakeholders interviewed explained that after identifying ex-service personnel, the L&D team works with the police and other stakeholders including voluntary sector organisations, to prepare a package of information for the court, to enable the courts to make the most informed decisions regarding sentencing. The service extends to the families of people going through the CJS.

"… the thing about the veterans' pathways that we're really keen on is that Liaison and Diversion see them first."

(Interview No 28, Health and Justice, England, Phase 1)

"If there are specific veteran-focused needs, either for that veteran or their family members then all of our Liaison and Diversion services are required to construct a veterans' pathway where there are local services into which they can refer that individual so, they can get that more appropriate, tailored veteran-centred support."

(Interview No. 28, Health and Justice, England)

The information on L&D and diversion from prosecution came directly from professional stakeholders as none of the ex-service personnel we interviewed had been through these routes.

In Scotland, we heard that suitability to be diverted from prosecution is assessed by the COPFS after receiving a standard police report, and that those who are identified as ex-service personnel would be referred into third sector organisations such as ASAP or Poppyscotland. Diversion from prosecution assessments then aim to report on underlying issues relating to their offending, and if suitable, JSW would design an intervention to address these causes. The intention of the assessments is to divert individuals from prosecution where applicable (Scottish Government, 2023).

"A lot of the time actually, since the alleged offences took place, they've actually done things themselves to build strategies to avoid it happening again so, it's really just feeding that back. We submit a report into the Procurator Fiscal detailing a bit of the background, what they are doing to avoid it happening again and if we need to, defer it for more time for them to engage in relevant interventions. It's quite positive, it doesn't go anywhere near the court… the Sheriff wouldn't know anything about it. If there are any further offences that are dealt in the court the sheriff doesn't get that information that they've been diverted at all. That's part of the incentive to - it's actually for keeping people away, out of the criminal justice system."

(Interview No 5, Scotland, JSW, Phase 2)

This interviewee also reflected on the current barriers to diversionary support, primarily that, in their view, the service seems to prioritise women and those under 21 compared to other areas.

"For example, if we can see they've got vulnerabilities, or if someone has got physical or mental health issues, recent adult concerns, we'll try and prioritise that. But to be honest I think that's something we're not very good at, we tend to prioritise on the women and the under-21s".

(Interview No 5, Scotland, JSW, Phase 2)

In England, Project Nova routinely liaised with police forces to provide support to ex-service personnel[18]. From a stakeholder perspective, the relative strength of referral mechanisms to Project Nova from within policing was perceived as differing depending on the type of contact with the CJS. Referral mechanisms in police custody were seen as strong, and less consistent when identified 'on the street' when an arrest is not made. It was indicated, in some cases, that referrals to Project Nova or other agencies were not being made at first contact prior to an arrest where support could be offered.

"so, you don't have to come into custody anymore….so, if they see a veteran who is struggling a little bit. Whatever that may be, they can refer them straight to Project Nova."

(Interview No 13, Police, England, Phase 1)

"If we can address that problem at the very first time a police car pulls up there, we are on a winner, we really are. That isn't happening really at the moment."

(Interview No 15, Police, England, Phase 1)

Ex-service personnel who identify themselves in a police force where Project Nova operates are supposed to be automatically referred and provided with tailored support. However, one participant suggested some people may still be missed if they are in and out of police custody suites very quickly or investigating officers are unaware of Project Nova. One participant also referenced Police Works, an IT system which they estimated to be currently utilised by 20% of police forces. They suggested the inconsistency of using this system may impact the ease with which different police forces can electronically update, amend and broaden their Armed Forces identification question(s).

In April 2023, Project Nova was commissioned by NHS England to provide a wide range of health and justice services pre- and post-prison custody, while continuing their diversion services in police custody suites. Project Nova has been delivered by Forces Employment Charity (FEC) in partnership with Walking with the Wounded since October 2014. Upon the expansion of the service in April 2023, it was renamed as Op NOVA, delivered by FEC, with Care After Combat subcontracted to provide in-prison support.

It is important to note that, on interviewing ex-service personnel, very few said that they had been offered or received support via the police after positively identifying themselves and agreeing to access support. This is at least in part due the length of time that has elapsed since interviewees had contact with the police. Of those who were offered support, six were in England and one was in Scotland.

4.4 Barriers to provision and uptake of support in police custody

The barriers to identification set out above, including ex-service personnel not feeling there was a positive reason for being asked, have implications for the uptake of support. Not identifying as having served in the Armed Forces restricts the ability to provide information and opportunity to take up support. Additional barriers to support were also identified, which will be explored in depth in this section.

4.4.1 Connections and communication with support services

Whilst the majority of feedback about support services was positive, we heard some examples from ex-service personnel and stakeholders about communication difficulties with support services or feeling let down when support services they were referred to didn't meet them when planned, impacting future engagement.

[18] In non-prison custody settings

"… they said they were going to get in touch with [Organisation] and I did speak to someone from [Organisation] for a while but then couldn't get hold of him after a while."

(Interview No 11, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"The person who I originally spoke to asked to meet me and I said, 'Where do you want to meet me?'… I tried to explain where I was staying at the time, because I was homeless for a few days, and I say, 'I only have £8 in my pocket and it's going to cost me £6 to come and meet you'. And when I turned up at the café I got a phone call, 'Sorry I can't make it'. So, I'd literally spent my last bit of money that I had…so I literally had £2 to last me two days, so I washed my hands with them and said, 'That's bang out of order, I can't believe you expected me to do that; you've left somebody with no money'."

(Interview No 12, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

It is important to note that these may be isolated experiences with referral services, and different local sites provided a different landscape of support uptake. For example, one ex-service personnel in Staffordshire received long-term support from Project Nova both before going to prison and after release, over a two-year period.

"She said, 'I'll contact [Project] Nova'. And they did and I got a lovely lady… who used to come out and visit me about once a month and sometimes ring me every week, that was up until I went to prison… She rings me about once a month or so, but I said to her, 'I've got everything; I'm fine as I am'. I just like a phone call now and then because she's got some more worse than me, I know she has. But I'm quite happy just to have a phone call now and then."

(Interview No 13, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

4.4.2 Reluctance to take up support

Some police stakeholders and ex-service personnel identified that ex-service personnel were reluctant to take up support which was offered. This is a common theme throughout this report across the different stages of the justice system. One ex-service person relayed that Project Nova tried to contact him following police custody, but he did not engage with the service. In some cases, it appeared that there were additional factors which impacted on not engaging with support, including here the individual's state of mind and lack of cohesion.

"I think they did yes, but you'll have to just excuse me it's all a bit of a blur because I was quite sick at the time. But I think definitely there were efforts from Project Nova to be in contact with me and there were probably efforts from quite a few different entities, but I was all over the place at the time. It's probably one of the difficulties, why I didn't engage with people, it was all a bit disjointed and there was no cohesion."

(Interview No 14, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

The challenge of convincing ex-service personnel to seek help was also affirmed by some police stakeholders:

"I think the needs of a veteran when they are in our custody are met adequately. So, we try and find out whether they are a veteran and signpost them to support and invariably they choose not to take up that support, which is a real problem. But ultimately we can't force somebody to access support for themselves, it's still their decision."

(Interview No 9, Police, Wales, Phase 2)

"The issue around that is that quite often they won't engage as well. They will get referrals through to go and speak to people or they get advice to go and speak to their GP and because of their life, because they have quite chaotic lifestyles around alcohol and drug use, they don't turn up for the appointments. So, they miss out on the appointments and it makes them worse. They are avoiding the support."

(Interview No 1, Police, England, Phase 2)

4.4.3 Nature of police custody

We were told that the experience of being taken into police custody is often stressful and overwhelming for people and this was identified as a potential barrier to ex-service personnel taking up offers of support at that point. The experience of being arrested, brought into police custody, being put in a cell, interviewed and asked for lots of personal information may create an environment unconducive for individuals to disclose personal information.

"We've just gone into their house, we've put them in handcuffs, we've dragged them into one of our custody centres, we've put them before our desk, we've taken their clothes off them and given them a nice tracksuit. We've put them in a cell, we've given them crap food, they are being offered a solicitor, they are going to get interviewed. They are probably not thinking further ahead than the next ten minutes at that particular point … so, therefore is asking them if they would like to be signposted for support at that particular point the best time? Probably not."

(Interview No 9, Police, Wales, Phase 2)

4.4.4 Insufficient information about support

The importance of raising awareness of what support is available was also highlighted by stakeholders. In Scotland, for example, one ex-service person was offered a support leaflet, but did not have a chance to go through it as he was being processed, the custodial setting gave him a limited opportunity to engage with the material. So, while it is possible that some ex-service personnel choose not to engage with available support, there also appears to be a lack of awareness of what options are available.

"So, I think it's an education thing around potentially us and our partners because it's not just us that deal with them… So I think there should be education across all the care sectors around the support that we've got available".

(Interview No 1, Police, England, Phase 2)

One ex-service person from Scotland commented that the barrier to ex-service personnel accessing support was a lack of information about the support. They also highlighted that they felt someone relaying the information and reaching out to ex-service personnel can be more effective than written material.

"I'd say lacking - lacking on information, lacking on people reaching out to you…so, all the information could be in booklets and things like that. If someone's not actually reaching out to you and saying, 'Have a chat with these; this is what they can do', things like that - Even having posters up around, I don't think that would be any good because people would see the posters, read it and think, 'I'll deal with that later'. Whereas if someone actually calls you to one side to have a chat, it's more personal, it's more informed rather than just a poster on a wall."

(Interview No 15, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

4.5 Identification during court proceedings

Court proceedings are potentially another opportunity for identification, particularly through the preparation of pre-sentence reports by probation and JSW and through engagement with legal professionals[19]. Nearly all the ex-service personnel we interviewed had been sentenced by the courts and were serving custodial or community sentences, with some exceptions where people were held on remand awaiting trial. This section will look at the experiences of ex-service personnel being identified through the court process, barriers to identification, as well as experiences of support for those who had already been identified.

Many ex-service personnel we interviewed could not recall if they were asked if they had served in the Armed Forces as part of preparation for a pre-sentence report or during wider court proceedings. For those who did remember, some mentioned that their service didn't come up at all in the court hearing.

"[Did your military history come up in court?] It didn't. That was one of the things when I tried to get an appeal that they pushed on because I had the PTSD as well. Not a big way through my military service but I think it's just over the period of years, things just got too much for me. After the Navy I just felt at a loss, 'What do I do now?"

(Interview No 16, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

"There was no questions or anything like that, it was just, 'You've done these offences, you've pleaded guilty, this is what's going to happen', and that was it as far as I remember. I don't think there was any mention of me being in the forces at all during my court case."

(Interview No 17, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

Others recalled that the information was in their pre-sentence report and/or was used as mitigation during sentencing:

"Yes, it was in the pre-sentence report. I think it was given in mitigation, not just from the military but the fact that I'd done close protection and that was the PTSD side of things. Although I'd had contact with the police in the past, this type of crime was out of character."

(Interview No 14, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"Yes, it came out with my solicitor. It was just part of my mitigating circumstances."

(Interview No 18, Ex-service personnel, Community, Wales, Phase 2)

"No, part of the character building for my solicitor was, I suppose, ex-forces, good nature, good background, as part of my defence character, for want of a better phrase."

(Interview No 19, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

It was difficult to establish in the course of all the stakeholder interviews in England if the question around ex-service personnel status is regularly asked as part of the preparation of pre-sentence reports. However, based on the interviews with probation practitioners, there is recognition that identification information should be picked up on pre-sentence reports, although there was mixed response if the question is asked as standard.

"As part of the pre-sentence report, most of the people will have a pre-sentence report, there will be discussions potentially around any trauma that they may have faced so, it could be picked up there. It's not necessarily a specified question though at that stage."

(Interview No 3, Probation, England, Phase 2)

[19] A pre-sentence report is an expert assessment of the nature and causes of a person's offending behaviour, the risk they pose and to whom, as well as an independent recommendation of the sentencing option(s) available to the court. Source: MoJ, 2021. Accessed October 2023: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pre-sentence-report-pilot-in-15-magistrates-courts

"Interviewee: Pre-Sentence Report, so, then they would get asked that question going, 'Are they military or are they ex-military… they'd be asked that in that meeting?

Interviewer: Yes, within the first five minutes".

(Interview No 10, Probation, England, Phase 2)

"If there was a pre-sentence report done, so, when somebody first attends court and if it's been adjourned for a full report, those questions would be asked as part of that assessment so I would then get the paperwork through from court, because it's our probation staff in the court so that travels with them."

(Interview No 11, Probation, England, Phase 2)

"So, obviously, the first time we have a person come into contact with us is through the court stage where obviously our probation practitioners will help write court reports before they go for sentencing… There is evidence of that being asked in obviously not necessarily fully across the board, and there is perhaps maybe an area of work that we need to do."

(Interview No 12, Probation, Wales, Phase 2)

It is worth noting that there has been much commentary about the use and quality of pre-sentence reports. In 2018/19 for example, the use of standard delivery pre-sentence reports, which can take up to 15 working days to complete and should be used for serious cases, were only used in 3% of cases compared to 30% in 2012/13. Oral reports, designed to be delivered on the day were used in far more cases. This context is relevant when considering the role of pre-sentence reports in identification (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2020).

In Scotland, the justice social workers we interviewed also confirmed that service history would invariably be recorded for JSW reports (formerly referred to as social enquiry reports), although it wasn't clear if this was a standard or consistent question.

"And I think if somebody is a veteran you are aware of it because you'll find it out from somewhere. There are case notes or more often than not it will come up when you interview somebody for a court report because you have to do their whole background for a big report. And it will be that point generally you'll find out somebody's a veteran."

(Interview No 13, JSW, Scotland, Phase 2)

As well as working in police custody, L&D teams can also identify ex-service personnel through their work in magistrates' courts and the busiest crown courts. We didn't speak to any ex-service personnel who had been in touch with L&D through this route.

4.6 Barriers to identification during court proceedings

Interviews with ex-service personnel and stakeholders highlighted that while there may be opportunities for identification during court proceedings, their current experience of identification was met with barriers largely emerging from advice from legal professionals, as well ex-service personnel's desire to not use the Armed Forces as an "excuse" for their offence.

4.6.1 Advice from legal professionals and perceptions

While some ex-service personnel recalled their service history being part of their pre-sentence report and/or being used by legal professionals as mitigating circumstances, we also heard a common theme of ex-service personnel being advised not to disclose their service history as they were led to believe it would negatively impact on sentencing.

In addition, it was further highlighted that the way ex-service personnel may present or behave in court, which was influenced by their service history, could be used against them.

"When I went through the courts this time they didn't want to disclose the fact that I'd been in the military in front of a jury … In case it influenced the jury in some way, that's what I was told."

(Interview No 20, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)

In addition, it was highlighted that some ex-service personnel may behave or present in court in a way that is different to what may be expected due to their military experiences, and that this may impact how they are perceived in court.

"Sorry, the criminal justice ladies who took my criminal justice report, they recommended to the Judge that I had no emotion and that I should have a psychiatric background [assessment], but the Judge said - I can't remember the lady's name now - she said no, she believes the way I was answering was due to my military experience."

(Interview No 21, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

"What I find difficult is that a lot of them, because of their PTSD they can't deal with the process of things like courts. This guy [details of offence], he can't really deal with talking to the lawyer because he can't be in a room with anybody for more than about five minutes before it's overwhelming, so, he has to leave the room. So, the PTSD is a really big problem with dealing with the criminal justice system for him at the moment. If he comes to see me and we're doing a benefit form, he comes with his partner, he'll sit down and he'll be vaping like mad in my office. We'll do five minutes and then he'll go, 'Sorry, just got to go outside', and he'll go and walk round the block.'"

(Interview No 14, Third sector, Scotland, Phase 2)

A number of ex-service personnel said in the interviews that perceptions in court are also informed by them being portrayed as 'trained killers' or in terms of them making excuses for their actions. This poses a significant barrier to identification if ex-service personnel believe they would get a harsher sentence due to the perception that ex-service personnel are trained in the use of violence.

"Yes, the Judge made a point of saying that I was Army trained and all this, trying to twist it round that I'm a lethal weapon. He was an idiot."

(Interview No 22, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)

"So, I had a lot of military professionals involved with my military background from the beginning but then when I came into [police] custody it was used against me and it was like, 'You are making excuses'."

(Interview No 23, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)

"We're classed as trained killers."

(Interview No 24, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

4.6.2 Use of service history as an 'excuse'

Some ex-service personnel reported that they didn't like using their service history in court as they felt it seemed an excuse for the offence committed or wasn't relevant.

"It's never really come up in court and my solicitors don't like really using it. I don't really like using it as an excuse, 'I was in the Army'. That's what it feels like to me, just an excuse."

(Interview No 25, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"No, it didn't have any influence, and can see why because at the end of the day it was the crime that I'd done. People were injured and I don't think the fact that I was in the forces should have anything to [do with it]."

(Interview No 1, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)

4.6.3 Support during court proceedings

We found examples of third sector organisations providing support for ex-service personnel through the court process. This included advocacy such as writing letters to the court setting out the steps ex-service personnel had been taking and progress made since charge; as well as support navigating court processes. We heard direct examples of this support impacting sentencing decisions including deferred sentencing. As previously mentioned, L&D also operate out of courts in England and Wales and although this wasn't something raised by ex-service personnel, we are aware that they also provide support through the court hearing itself as well as referrals into services.

In areas where Project Nova operated, ex-service personnel might receive support from Project Nova through the court process following a referral in police custody. In some cases, caseworkers provide an assessment of the individual if their status as ex-service personnel was pertinent to the offence.

> ***"Now, I needed the court to understand this is not just someone who has just thought, 'I'm going to get in my car and drive'. He actually didn't know he'd even done it and he was so ashamed of himself. He felt he'd let his regiment down and he was isolated. You name it, it was everything… so put together a court report and let the solicitor read it out in court, 'This is the reason for the trauma, this is the reason for the alcohol; this is what he's done since his arrest, this is how he feels about it, remorseful'. And you could see the remorse on his face in court. And the judge basically had to give him a fine, had to give him a ban, but he didn't get probation, he didn't get anything else."***

(Interview No 15, Third sector, England, Phase 2)

This kind of work was observed in other areas as well. For example, in Hull, one voluntary organisation detailed their experiences with supporting ex-service personnel in court. This support was possible as ex-service personnel were already in contact with the organisation.

> ***"Of course yes, on quite a few cases. I'm just writing a letter up for somebody who's going to court. And we've just worked with two lads who were both up for fighting offences. We've just worked with both of those, we've attended court with them as well, passed a letter over to the judge from ourselves because they've been attending our talking groups, and said how well they are getting on and that we're here to support them whatever happens through the judicial system."***

(Interview No 16, Third sector, England, Phase 2)

In another instance in Portsmouth, a small organisation encountered an ex-service person when they were in police custody and assisted with his rehabilitation needs, leading to more informed sentencing decisions.

> ***"[Case worker] met him at the station as appropriate adult. When he got to court… it got to that point where I spoke to his solicitor and said, 'What can we do?' … his [case worker] reports are very much considered and welcomed by the court… the judge said, 'Yes, he can go to Liverpool for rehab, but I'm not discharging anything; you will come back to me'… It's [sentence] deferred. So, he's back in court at the end of February [2023]."***

(Interview No 17, Third sector, England, Phase 2)

In the above cases, identification occurred in police custody, and the voluntary sector organisations were able to provide support to ex-service personnel including helping them to navigate the court system.

4.7 Summary

This chapter details how individuals experience police contact following an arrest and the factors that influence identification. The evidence suggests that policing activity in terms of identification is largely driven via the custody suite, which, while very important for some, may miss valuable opportunities to identify and increase access to support. A number of barriers to identification were identified including the nature of police custody and timing of the question, distrust of the police, and clarity on why the question is being asked. It is clear that whilst we saw some positive work, more can be done to overcome these barriers. There was a mixed picture with regard to the judicial process in terms of how and if ex-service personnel status was disclosed as part of the proceedings. Ex-service personnel had different experiences of their service history being used in court proceedings and there was a widely held view that it could be used negatively, which could have an impact on identification. We heard about voluntary organisations providing support through the court process following identification at the police custody stage. It is evident that overcoming the barriers to identification and support at the police contact stage could bring significant benefit to more ex-service personnel by linking them into services at an early stage. The next chapters will explore the experiences of ex-service personnel in prison and whilst under probation supervision in the community.

Prison

5. Identification and support in prison

A total of 104 ex-service personnel were interviewed for this research project, 95 of whom were in prison custody. The Howard League for Penal Reform (2011) and HM Inspectorates of Prison (2014) noted that ex-service personnel perhaps form the largest occupational subset in prison, with ex-service personnel being more likely to be convicted of more serious crimes as compared to the rest of the prison population. 38% of the ex-service personnel we interviewed had been convicted of sexual offences, which is higher than the total proportion of sexual offence convictions amongst the adult male prison population (20% in England and Wales; 22% in Scotland)[20]. While this should not be taken as an indication of the number of ex-service personnel in prison by offence type, it is reflective of the estimations conducted by other research (HLPR, 2011; DASA, 2010). As reported by the Howard League (2011), ex-service personnel convicted of sexual offences, as with anyone convicted of such offence types, will often maintain their innocence. This was our experience as well, as many interviewees denied guilt. This can affect their experiences and perceptions of the justice system, as well as their engagement with support pathways.

While no blame was placed on the Armed Forces by the ex-service personnel we interviewed, they did observe that instability and trauma experienced in early life played, in their view, a large part in influencing their offending. For those convicted of non-sexual offences, mental health issues, substance misuse, homelessness, unsuitable employment options, and a breakdown of family life and close relationships were stated to be contributing factors to offending, which have also been frequently echoed in the literature (Grand-Clement, *et al.*, 2020; HLPR, 2011). For some interviewees, these factors were exacerbated by military experience, either because the military provided stability that was taken away upon discharge, or because active service worsened their mental health conditions.

Most ex-service personnel whose experiences have been reflected in this report were interviewed in prison. The closed and regimented nature of prisons can allow ViCSOs to identify ex-service personnel, investigate their needs, and offer them specialised support. This chapter will explore these mechanisms of identification and support, successes, challenges, and key areas of opportunity. At the outset of this chapter, we will detail the impact of Covid-19, as this was a key factor shaping all experiences in prison.

[20] Source: UK Prison Population Statistics, House of Commons, September 2023. Accessed October 2023: https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN04334/SN04334.pdf
Source: Scottish Prison Population Statistics, 2023. Accessed December 2023: https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2023/11/scottish-prison-population-statistics-2022-23/documents/report-22-23/report-22-23/govscot%3Adocument/Scottish%2BPrison%2BPopulation%2BStatistics%2B2022-23%2B-%2BAnalytical%2BReport%2B%25281%2529.pdf

5.1 Impact of Covid-19

The research team visited prisons between June 2022 and January 2023. Little time had passed after Covid-19 restrictions had been lifted in the community, but in a prison environment, regimes were even slower to respond to the relaxation of restrictions. All of the prisons we visited were not operating regimes that were comparable to how things were pre-Covid-19, and this was described as the 'new normal' in one prison.

"So, we're not going back to how it was. The new normal is that we only have half the wing out at any one time and they are people who go to work, they are out all day because they've got something to do... then the people who are left on the wing come out in small groups so you've only maybe got about 30 out. Then in the afternoon the other half come out who are left on the wing."

(Interview No 18, Prison, England, Phase 2)

Most prisons we visited had experienced issues identifying ex-service personnel during lockdown, due to limited face-to-face contact with individuals because of the restricted regime. This was highlighted by induction staff in one prison:

"So, for the most part I will try to do face-to-face interviews with the guys. However, regime, Covid, the fact it's only me as one member of staff here, sometimes I have to send off paperwork and ask them to complete it and send it back... On the paper, most of the time it's left blank."

(Interview No 19, Prison, England, Phase 2)

The pandemic has also impacted the level of support offered to ex-service personnel, which we will discuss in greater length through the following sections and chapters. The impact of Covid-19 is not to be underestimated and is not an issue that is unique to ex-service personnel. Moreover, the current provision of support highlighted in this study should not be assumed to be a reflection of the historical provision of support. Rather, Covid-19 has been a disruptor to the current provision of support, providing new challenges for prisons and other stakeholders to return to the level of support that existed before the pandemic (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2021).

5.2 Veterans in Custody Support Officers (ViCSOs)

ViCSOs are prison staff members who aim to identify and support ex-service personnel in prison at the earliest possible opportunity (Robson, *et al.*, 2019). ViCSOs are often responsible for finding different ways of identifying ex-service personnel and providing a service that is completely tailored to their needs. The ViCS programme is not uniformly established across all prisons in England, Scotland, and Wales, therefore the programme may differ from prison to prison (ibid.).

Many ViCSOs we interviewed had previously served in the Armed Forces and therefore felt they were able to develop rapport with ex-service personnel in prison due to their shared experiences. The evidence in this study shows that ViCSOs do crucial work to identify and support ex-service personnel in prison. For instance, in many cases they lead the identification of ex-service personnel in custody, and our research suggests that the identification of many ex-service personnel would slip through the net without ViCSO support. All practices we have observed in prison are driven by ViCSOs, even though 9 of 11 ViCSOs interviewed volunteered to take the role in addition to their main responsibilities in the establishment. Therefore, they have to make time, sometimes beyond their regular working hours, to address the needs of ex-service personnel in custody.

"My second role, which is all voluntary, is the Veterans in Custody Support Officer, which I don't really get any time to do so, a lot of it is in my own time, building a relationship and a rapport with the guys that are in here, trying to get them the right help and pointing them in the right direction as and when I can."

(Interview No 20, Prison, ViCSO, England, Phase 2)

ViCSOs also drive the ex-service personnel-specific support programmes in the prison, based on the time and resources they have to create appropriate pathways. Therefore, the ViCSO acts as a facilitator between ex-service personnel and in-prison support pathways. The identification tools ViCSOs use, as well as the support pathways they promote, will be discussed in more detail in the upcoming sections.

5.3 Identification in prison

Nearly all of the prisons visited had a multi-faceted approach to identifying ex-service personnel in custody. While there is no standard reception form across prisons (HM Inspectorates of Prisons, 2014), all of the prisons visited as part of this research asked the question, *"Have you ever served in the Armed Forces?"*[21] in their reception forms, including the prisons in Scotland. In England and Wales, the Basic Custody Screening interview is also used to identify ex-service personnel (Ministry of Justice, 2022). Often the forms did not provide enough space to give detailed responses. Additionally, further methods are then used to address identification gaps or provide a richer service history.

"The induction booklet, first night in custody booklet that they'll get, that asks them also, 'Are you an ex-service personnel?' But I have found the best tool for me to identify individuals is the coffee mornings. That's how that gentleman came to my attention yesterday, through the coffee mornings because they see other individuals going to it, 'Where are you going?"

(Interview No 21, Prison, ViCSO, England, Phase 2)

"I think they always have to go through those induction forms and you sit with an officer to do them. In every jail I've been to that question is on the form. So, they'll tick that off and that's when they'll get somebody to come and see you. It's normally another prisoner who's a veterans' rep within the jail."

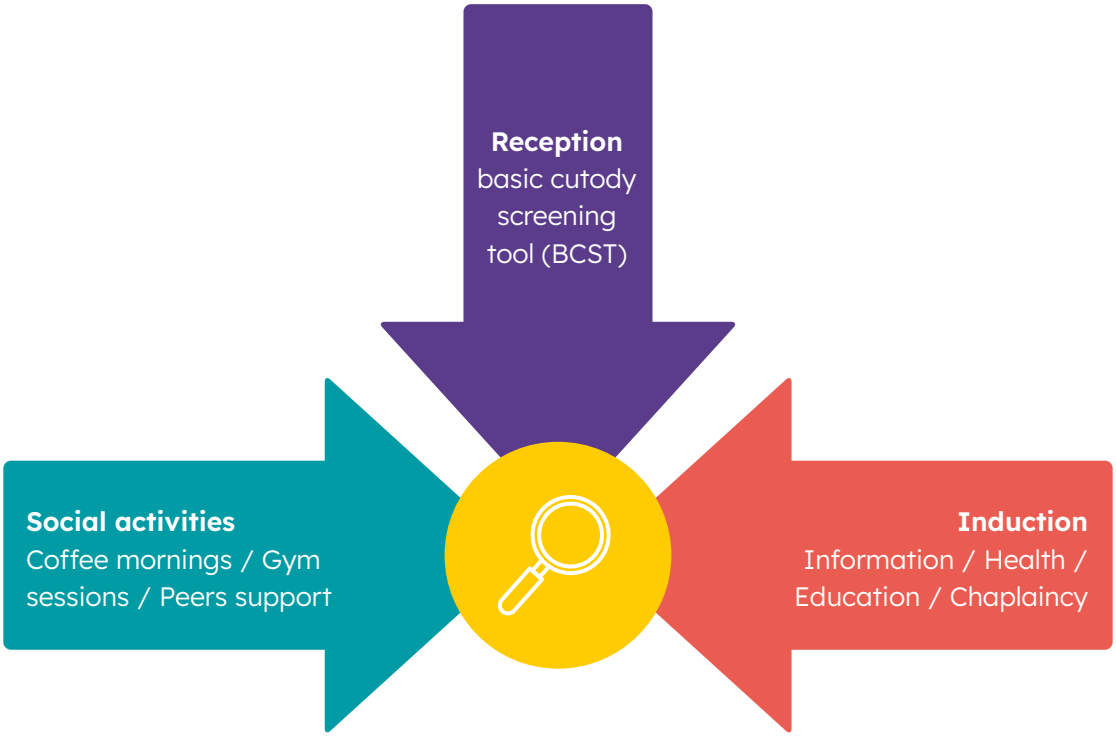
(Interview No 26, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

All establishments we engaged with for this project identify ex-service personnel through a range of approaches. The question is asked at reception, and if identification is successful, either relevant prison officers or appointed 'peer support mentors'[22] are requested to establish contact or build a relationship with the ex-service personnel.

[21] The wording of the question is not known to be uniform across the board, however the question usually is a variant of, "Have you been in the Armed Forces?" and is supposed to cover reservists.

[22] Different prisons use different terminology, here we use the term "peer support mentor" to refer to ex-service personnel in prison who volunteer to identify and engage with other ex-service personnel on their wings. There are no fixed responsibilities or job descriptions for peer support mentors: they usually do tasks that can aid ViCSOs to identify and support ex-service personnel in custody. This includes wearing t-shirts or badges which identify them as ex-service personnel, looking out for tattoos, mannerisms, and language-markers that are known to set ex-service personnel apart.

Figure 5.1 Processes of Identification in Prison



Sometimes, ex-service personnel may be too overwhelmed to identify themselves at first, as for many it is their first custodial sentence (Kelly, 2014). Some interviewees corroborated this, relaying that the unfamiliarity of a prison environment left them too overwhelmed to answer the question at reception.

"When you first come in you are like a rabbit in headlights, especially when it's your first time. So, much happens, so why people are asking you things, I can't remember who, when, why or how I was asked."

(Interview No 24, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

Alternatively, the reception staff may not always ask the question. In such instances, the ViCSOs we interviewed spoke about relying on induction staff or peer support mentors to make the first connection.

"... when they come from reception they go to induction, to B-wing. Part of the induction process on the paperwork they go through is to ask them if they've been a member of the Armed Forces. Once the [name of wing] staff, induction staff have got that documented they automatically just, 'Stakeholder 01, there's a veteran just landed on the wing, he states he was in so-and-so, can you come over and have a chat with him?"

(Interview No 22, Prison, ViCSO, Scotland, Phase 2)

"I was speaking to one of the boys on the hall and he said, 'Are you an ex-serviceman? I was an ex-serviceman.' That fellow prisoner took my name to ViCSO."

(Interview No 27, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

In prisons with dedicated ex-service personnel programmes such as a 'veterans' wing' or regular breakfast clubs, some participants expressed that they felt more comfortable identifying themselves after learning about the bespoke support available to them. Those identified at reception are then informed about available programmes and socialising opportunities. Beyond reception, ViCSOs also promote the available support services through posters around the wings to promote self-identification.

"Once they find out about the veterans' programme and they see how it runs, although they might have chosen not to tell us that they were a veteran, we find a month or two down the line they think, 'I am actually a veteran, is there any chance I can go down there?'"

(Interview No 23, Prison, ViCSO, England, Phase 2)

"Yes, it wasn't until I hit reception and they asked if I'd ever served in the military. I said yes and ended up on [name of wing] and then I went to the veterans' wing…"

(Interview No 28, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"I randomly saw a poster up. I mentioned it to one of the officers in [Prison] then a veteran support officer came round and asked me my military number. I gave him my military number and they went away and then on this monthly meeting they have in [Prison] they dragged me along. I met SSAFA and [unintelligible] and a couple of other support agencies who came in."

(Interview No 29, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)

In some cases, the chaplaincy team can also help identify and drive engagement from ex-service personnel.

"When you get to any jail you've got to fill out a package. There's always that question in there, 'Were you ever in the military? What regiment were you in?' And then a padre comes round, like a vicar, and he'll ask do you want to talk about your Army life…"

(Interview No 30, Ex-service personnel, Community, Wales, Phase 2)

After ex-service personnel are identified, the ViCSOs are responsible for verification of service. This is done through SSAFA or the MoD records office based in Glasgow. The process can sometimes take some time, but ViCSOs reported that they are adept at being able to discern if someone has served, usually through their language, behaviour, and/or physical markers such as tattoos.

"Also, for lack of a better description, squaddie terminology. There are certain words that I'll still use and certain terminology that I'll still use that only other ex-soldiers would understand and pick up on. That's a big one for me, that's how I generally ID people as being ex-forces. That's more an Army thing, I'm sure the RAF and the Navy have similar things and similar ways of ID-ing someone".

(Interview No 24, Prison, England, Phase 2)

5.4 Barriers to identification in prison

This section explores reasons identified in the analysis as to why some ex-service personnel don't identify themselves. It is important to note here that ex-service personnel who were interviewed for this research had all identified themselves at some point, and therefore the barriers to identification listed here are based on their recollections of what prevented them from identifying themselves initially, in addition to stakeholder experiences of barriers to identification. Barriers to identification fall into two broad categories: institutional and individual. Institutional barriers refer to barriers that exist due to the functioning of the CJS. Individual barriers to identification stem from ex-service personnel's perceptions of the justice system, informed both by their experiences of the CJS and military training/experiences (Grand-Clement**,** *et al.***,** 2020). The findings presented in this section reveal how such barriers are complex and challenging to overcome.

Figure 5.2 Institutional and individual barriers to identification

Institutional barriers to identification

- Time and capacity of ViCSOs
- Staff constraints and working relationships
- Information sharing about benefits of identification and inconsistency of support

Individual barriers to identification

- Timing and overwhelming environment
- Concerns of legitimacy
- Reluctance to answer questions about combat experience
- Feelings toward the military
- Protection from anti-military sentiments
- Shame

5.4.1 Institutional barriers

5.4.1.1 Time and capacity of ViCSOs

In the prisons that participated in this research, significant challenges and differences between prisons were identified in relation to resource. Of the 11 prisons we visited, only two – HMP Holme House and HMP & YOI Parc - have full-time paid positions for the ViCSO role. Other ViCSOs were in full-time employment at the prison in various regular prison service roles, such as wing officers, offender managers, induction officers etc.

> ***"Being a ViCSO, takes a lot of your time. You end up - you'll sit here, have your lunch and you end up going on the computer and answering emails and sorting things out. We rarely have any downtime but I like to keep on top, I like to feel as though I'm in control here and things aren't getting away from me. But it's difficult to get time, because, 'I'll do it'… It's difficult getting allocated the time, that's the main bugbear."***

(Interview No 25, Prison, ViCSO, England, Phase 2)

> ***"They are not given enough time. You can see that they want to dedicate more time but it's not really a productive time within the eyes of the prison service."***

(Interview No 31, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

5.4.1.2 Staff constraints and working relationships

In November 2022, the Justice Select Committee launched an inquiry to investigate workforce pressures in the prison system in England and Wales. The Committee noted that within a year "there has been a fall of 600 staff in prison officer and custodial manager roles", which illustrates concerns about staffing constraints in the prison system (UK Parliament Committees, 2022). In Scotland as well, staff shortages and retention were highlighted as factors adversely affecting the overall prison population health (Scottish Government, 2022). While staffing constraints impact the entire prison population, the impact on dedicated staff for ex-service personnel was felt to affect identification.

> ***"I think even just the jail being fully staffed would help, so, if the jail was fully staffed and I would walk away from my [unintelligible] for an hour here or there when I needed to, that would probably help. At the minute I tend to only really get anything done on the weekend because we have extra staff on the weekend."***

(Interview No 26, Prison, ViCSO, Scotland, Phase 2)

Staffing constraints can make working relationships in prisons more difficult. With high staff turnover, it was felt it became difficult for ViCSOs to establish relationships with different departments within the establishment to aid identification of ex-service personnel.

> ***"I don't know what's going on anymore and I don't even know who's in charge anymore. That is a big issue, and they change roles. Who is it this week? In the end I just go and ask the same person who's helpful".***

(Prison Officer, ViCSO)[23]

[23] Unattributed quote to maintain anonymity.

5.4.1.3 Information sharing about benefits of identification and inconsistency of support

From the interviews with ex-service personnel, we were told that their motivation to share their ex-service personnel status was influenced by knowledge or lack of knowledge of the support pathways such identification may open up. In addition, some ex-service personnel reported that they had seen no benefits to identifying. This is exacerbated by support pathways being inconsistent in some prisons, such as infrequent coffee mornings, or limited third sector organisation presence. By not understanding the benefits and/or consequences of identification, some individuals may be reluctant to engage with or identify themselves as ex-service personnel.

"We have no carrot; we've got the stick but no carrot… Yes, what are the benefits of coming out as a veteran? One said, 'I have come out as saying I'm a veteran and I'm getting nothing different to you so, why should I? What's the point?'"

(Interview No 5, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"Since I've been back, since the three months I've done, there are no veteran meetings or nothing at all, there's been nothing like that. I've identified as a veteran but I'm in the same boat as everyone else who's a veteran, you don't really get any extra things. They say there's a coffee morning but I've yet to see one. I haven't seen anything like that."

(Interview No 32, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)

"Within the prison population 5% have served or whatever, it's just for stats. It's nothing else."

(Interview No 6, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

5.4.2 Individual barriers to identification

5.4.2.1 Timing and overwhelming environment

As reflected in the literature, ex-service personnel are more likely than the general population to serve a custodial sentence for their first conviction, and are also more likely to be older (HM Inspectorates of Prisons, 2014). Prison can be an overwhelming environment, especially on first arrival. Whilst it was commonly felt that asking an identification question as soon as possible was the right approach, it was also recognised that ex-service personnel may be in shock, under immense stress, or have other considerations that make them unlikely to identify at that point, and that there needed to be other opportunities to identify when they felt more comfortable.

"Yes, it's nice to talk. But there's a certain time, you can ask them, but you have to make sure they are comfortable."

(Interview No 16, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

"A good time [to ask the question] I think would be as soon as possible, as early as possible. A bad time - I suppose the only bad time would be if they are incapable of answering questions. Let's say, if somebody has taken drugs or they are psychotic or some medical complaint, that would be a bad time. Generally, I would say the earlier the better really, as soon as possible."

(Interview No 33, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"They come in and a lot of veterans are first timers, not all, but a lot are but even if they are not first timers, during the admissions process you've got all sorts going on in your head and you might feel vulnerable about declaring that you are a veteran in that particular environment."

(Interview No 23, Prison, Wales, Phase 1)

5.4.2.2 Concerns of legitimacy

Another significant individual barrier to identification is the self-assessment of an ex-service personnel's 'legitimate right' to label themselves a 'veteran'. Many ex-service personnel who were interviewed did not perceive themselves as part of an ex-service personnel community for a multitude of reasons, including but not limited to length of service; lack of deployments or combat experience; or the circumstances surrounding their discharge. It is well-documented that ex-service personnel in the CJS are more likely to have served for a shorter period of time than those without justice contact, and do not tend to offend for a significant period of time after leaving the Armed Forces (HM Inspectorates of Prisons, 2014; HLPR, 2011). Therefore, there is considerable 'distance' for many ex-service personnel between their time of service and their contact with the CJS which may also mean that they do not identify with the label of 'veteran'.

"Some of them [don't identify] because they hadn't been in long enough. They'd maybe just done the basic training but that doesn't make any difference because from the day you take the queen's shilling you can do one day in the forces and you are entitled to every benefit that I get as a [22-year] soldier. I can't understand it [why they would not identify]."

(Interview No 34, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"But they [ex-service personnel] get embarrassed because the others - to be honest there are a few veterans that will go up to them and say, 'You aren't even a veteran'. They will approach them in a nasty manner because they have served longer. And they will say, 'You aren't even worthy of a badge'. That's wrong. It doesn't matter if you've served a day, it doesn't matter."

(Interview No 35, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

Another ex-service person who is also a peer support mentor mentioned that some older individuals who did national service did not feel eligible to identify themselves as ex-service personnel.

"... I've found in here is people who've done national service, they don't think they've got a right [to label themselves as ex-service personnel]."

(Interview No 36, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

5.4.2.3 Reluctance to answer questions about combat experience

Some ex-service personnel shared that once people knew they had served, they were commonly asked questions such as 'how many people have you killed?' which they found intrusive.

"Yes, 'Did you shoot anyone? Did you kill anyone? Did you see anyone killed'. Just the toughest six months of my life and the first thing you ask is [if I killed anyone]..."

(Interview No 37, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

"Not so much ignorance of other people or as a veteran you always get asked the same thing, 'How many people have you killed?' It's not helpful to anyone. Or the other one, 'How many tours have you done? How many times have you done this, how many times have you done that? Have you done this, have you done that? Did you watch SAS Who Dares Wins?"

(Interview No 36, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

Questions that 'test' ex-service personnel's authenticity may create environments where they may not want to reveal their service history to avoid further questioning – either about combat experience or lack thereof. Furthermore, being asked about combat experience could be a trigger for those who already struggle with combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and great care must be taken to ensure staff at the prison are aware of ex-service personnel's mental health needs which relate specifically to their experiences in the Armed Forces.

5.4.2.4 Feelings toward the Armed Forces

A few ex-service personnel expressed their perceptions of the Armed Forces as influencing their decision-making around revealing their Armed Forces status. For one ex-service person, fears of bringing the Armed Forces into disrepute impeded identification.

"No, I tell a lie [when asked if he always identified as having served]. I believe they asked me when I came into prison, when I first came into prison and I said I was but I didn't want anyone notifying. I just wanted to leave it as that because I didn't want to bring any part of the Army into disrepute. I've still got that mentality where I don't want what I did connected to the Army in any way because it's not the Army's fault that I'm here for what I'm here for."

(Interview No 38, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"… I suppose for the first month or two I was a bit cagey whether or not I disclosed the fact that I was military. But as one officer said to me, 'You can quite clearly see from your bearing that you are military'. So, if I stuck out like a sore thumb to him, I suppose I would to others. I'm proud of my service and therefore I have no reason to hide my service. Some people probably thought their service was a waste of time, and that sort of stuff. Me personally, I was very proud of my service".

(Interview No 39, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

Conversely, one ex-service person stated that he only recently started positively identifying himself, as he had negative feelings toward the Armed Forces.

"I do now [identify]. I never always because I was always bitter towards the [Army] - but I'm now proud of what I've done, I'm proud to have served."

(Interview No 37, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

5.4.2.5 Protection from anti-military sentiments

It was observed during the course of this research that there were perceptions or threat of anti-military sentiments which prevented the identification of ex-service personnel who felt their service history may put them at risk of harm. A small number of ex-service personnel interviewed reported instances of anti-military violence or threat of violence that they themselves experienced. Others cited concerns due to the known views of the prison population locally. Most spoke of concerns they had heard from their peers.

"The thing is, before I came to prison, I stayed in an area where it was 99% IRA supporting and as someone who is ex-military… at that point I was wary if my status and that sphere of my status came out, I could be in a lot of bother."

(Interview No 37, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

"Sometimes I think some of the lads won't want to do it because you get accused of things that apparently we've done in Afghanistan and Iraq."

(Interview No 11, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"When I was in [Prison]… This was the time when Isis was around and I was in jail and they knew I was a [veterans'] rep, we all had rep cards. We had to remove all the rep cards, your badges and your poppies and that. And he said these guys have threatened to behead somebody in the jail and they were on about getting a [ex-service personnel's peer support mentor]. I remember all this … There again they moved these four guys out of the jail in no time but it was a bit scary being in jail when somebody's threatening to behead - it's crazy."

(Interview No 35, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"Up north you've still got IRA sympathisers. Saying that, I had one in here who said he had connections with the IRA and made veiled threats."

(Interview No 40, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

5.4.2.6 Shame

It was suggested by professionals that ex-service personnel may be too ashamed to identify themselves. It is, however, important to note that very few ex-service personnel stated that they were too ashamed to identify themselves, rather many stakeholders had observed in their experience of engaging with ex-service personnel that feelings of shame or embarrassment often led them to not positively identify themselves.

"They are either ashamed, feel disgraced."

(Interview No 20, Prison, ViCSO, England, Phase 2)

"Maybe they could be ashamed of their past history in service or maybe wouldn't want to disclose that."

(Interview No 41, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)

5.5 Support in prison

The frequency and quality of support mechanisms for ex-service personnel vary greatly from prison to prison, with establishments such as HMP & YOI Parc, and HMP Holme House having more advanced support programmes due to the availability of dedicated staff. Conversely, some prisons struggled to organise basic events.

Existing literature suggests that the overarching needs of ex-service personnel in prison do not vary greatly from those of the general population (HLPR, 2011). However, for many of the ex-service personnel we interviewed, prison was viewed to be the first – and sometimes only – place where they were made aware of the services that are available to them due to their status as ex-service personnel, a finding that was also observed in the Howard League study.

Ex-service personnel in prison who were interviewed for this project spoke of requiring support before they offended and came into contact with the justice system, but not being able to access support. They told us that they have varying support needs, and not all relate to their service in the Armed Forces

Amongst those we interviewed, nine ex-service personnel mentioned care experience, and four spoke of sexual or physical abuse in childhood. It has been observed in the literature that experiences of childhood trauma can lead to the Armed Forces serving as a break between a tumultuous home life and a difficult post-forces transition (Harvey-Rolfe & Rattenbury, 2020; HLPR, 2011; Murray, *et al.*, 2022) and this was reflected in the experiences of those interviewed for this project. While accessing support in prison is clearly very late in this journey, support accessed at this point could help improve rehabilitation outcomes.

"I don't think I really treat them any different because I understand that everybody has different levels of trauma but I think with the veterans, I feel for them because they've gone and fought for their country and been sold this dream of, 'Come and join the Army, it's all wonderful'. But really you are trained as a killing machine and then when they are finished with you, 'Off you trot, off into society', and I think there's nothing for them. So, therefore I feel they need that extra bit of support when they are in here."

(Interview No 28, Prison, ViCSO, Wales, Phase 2)

This section will explore the existing support landscape in prisons, barriers to provision and uptake of support, and recommendations to improve the provision of support needed to improve ex-service personnel's rehabilitative journey.

Support programmes across the participating prisons have common formats of support with varying degrees of consistency and scale. This finding was prevalent across all three nations, with little variation in the organisations going into prisons to offer support across England and Wales. In Scotland, Scottish organisations go into prisons to offer support, in addition to some organisations like SSAFA that operate across the nations. Through our interviews, we identified the following support options:

- **Coffee Mornings:** The ViCSOs we interviewed aim to organise these monthly, but the frequency is often dependent on factors beyond their control: primarily, the availability of enough prison staff to facilitate the movement of ex-service personnel for the purpose of coffee mornings. On the whole, these initiatives have been very well-received, giving ex-service personnel an opportunity to socialise with people who have shared experiences as well as opportunities to seek help from prison staff with issues regarding their rehabilitation. The meetings are also sometimes attended by third sector staff, who offer mental health support, housing, and/or employment advice. Additionally, for those serving longer sentences who have little need for employment or housing support, coffee mornings can become the bridge between the relative isolation of prison and the broader range of support options that open up closer to release. Coffee mornings can be accessible, as older and/or disabled ex-service personnel can also participate in them. Finally, coffee mornings also serve as an incentive for ex-service personnel to identify themselves to prison staff, in order to have the opportunity to take part in socialising opportunities.

"We have a coffee morning one Friday every month where we invite those agencies in and internals just to come together. We'll have a chat, we'll have an ice breaker, we'll have a talk about different things, try and get different support agencies come in to offer something different. And every time we have a support agency in they say, 'I've got someone who could come down to the next meeting'."

(Interview No 29, Prison, ViCSO, Wales, Phase 2)

- **Gym sessions:** Many of the ex-service personnel spoke about the importance to them of maintaining their physical health. To this effect, some prisons we visited allow ex-service personnel extra gym time, or access to the gym one more day per week. Similar to coffee mornings, this also allows ex-service personnel opportunities to socialise with their peers and acts as an incentive for them to identify themselves. This appears to be a relatively cost-effective way to organise social events. However, it was highlighted that extra gym sessions are not always effective for older and/or disabled ex-service personnel due to accessibility issues.

"With the reps, we've organised a gym session on a Friday afternoon, just for the veterans."

(Interview No 5, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"[on the benefits of identifying] Sometimes you can be put on a better wing, extra gym..."

(Interview No 42, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

- **Mental health support (including PTSD):** The ex-service personnel who were interviewed spoke about their reluctance to seek help for their mental health issues, a finding that will be discussed further in this section. Nevertheless, on the whole, the ex-service personnel we interviewed relayed that they eventually did trust ViCSOs enough to convey their mental health needs. PTSD Resolution is a service that was cited in some of the participating prisons in England and Wales, with people who had used this service speaking positively about the support and therapy they received. As mentioned in Chapter 2, ex-service personnel are not a monolith of combat-related PTSD. In later sections we will explore the gaps in mental health support that could address wider mental health issues which may or may not be related to Armed Forces experiences. There was a general recognition that ex-service personnel require mental health support. However, we heard that they often faced long waiting lists for support in prison and we came across only a few prisons that had charities coming in to provide specialist mental health support.

"People with mental health issues and PTSD, I use PTSD Resolution, I refer to them. They will fund six sessions with a therapist. If they need more, they can go back to them and they can extend it, they have done in the past."

(Interview No 30, Prison, ViCSO, England, Phase 2)

"Yes, you can kind of understand that. These guys can't drop everything and go out and get a mental health nurse. We have got mental health nurses in here but it's crap, to put it bluntly, it is crap"

(Interview No 43, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"The waiting lists for the mental health team here, it's stupidly long. But at the same time they are only one person, one pair of hands."

(Interview No 29, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)

- **Third sector engagement:** Support programmes in prison are often reliant on the availability of third sector support. Many coffee mornings include attendees from organisations such as SSAFA, Care after Combat, and Combat Stress. The challenges observed with third sector engagement will be discussed in the next section, (5.6.1) but it should be highlighted here that third sector engagement clearly plays an important role in the support available for ex-service personnel in custody.

"Then closer to release date engaging them with outside agencies - your SSAFAs, your British Legions, and really homing in on what needs need to be met for them to have the best possible integration back into society."

(Interview No 28, Prison, ViCSO, Wales, Phase 2)

"I have a number of external partners and internal partners within the establishment that I use on a regular basis if somebody identifies as a veteran needing a bit of support. The main source for me would be Sacro mentoring services who aren't the 'be all and end all' but they are a great source for me and because they're not precious they will do what's best for the client and put them to the appropriate support services."

(Interview No 22, Prison, ViCSO, Scotland, Phase 2)

Whilst the above is not an exhaustive list of support options, these were the ones that were most commonly observed across different establishments. ViCSOs also organise additional social activities around important days for ex-service personnel, such as Remembrance Day.

5.6 Barriers to support in prison

Similar to identification, there are institutional and individual barriers to support provision in prison. A key barrier to provision and take up of support appears again to be the limited time ViCSOs have due to the voluntary nature of their role, and this barrier underpins nearly all the institutional barriers we will discuss in this section.

Figure 5.4 Institutional and Individual Barriers to Support

Institutional barriers to support

- Time and capacity of ViCSOs
- Connections with voluntary sector
- Shortage of appropriate health support

Individual barriers to support

- Awareness of support and eligibility
- Reluctance to seek support
- Dissatisfaction with inconsistent support options

5.6.1 Institutional barriers to support

5.6.1.1 Time and capacity of ViCSOs

As identified in the barriers to identification, the time and capacity of ViCSOs clearly impacted the level of support available in prisons. In prisons with full-time dedicated ViCSOs, the provision of diverse support options was much better established.

"Ultimately the thing at the moment is - this is not my full time job, this is done in between the margins, and the chain of command, they accept that. If I need time off they let me have time off. However, this isn't a full time job and to create a workshop, to create a wing where they would all be living that would require something like Holme House where you've got a veteran prison officer who's in charge of that and maybe a two or three man team."

(Interview No 31, Prison, ViCSO, England, Phase 2)

"Since I've been part time as well it's got even more difficult but I do what I can while I'm here. In fact I don't do that much other than bring services in, which is what I used to do, and have meetings once every now and again so, they can speak to some ex-service people and they can explain what they do and have a bit of a social event as well… I'd be happy to come in and be there, on my day off I'll come in and do it and do a session once every month or whatever for a social thing but it's also about finding a time when they are [ex-service personnel in prison] not working."

(Interview No 32, Prison, ViCSO, England, Phase 2)

5.6.1.2 Connections with voluntary sector

As discussed previously whilst discussing support provisions in prison (Section 5.5), engagement with third sector organisations seems to be crucial for the effective provision of support in prison. The staff we interviewed in prisons repeatedly highlighted the challenge of creating and maintaining these relationships. In some cases, it is difficult to establish a relationship with charities due to the difficulties of bringing external organisations into prison.

"I can understand why some charities don't really engage with the prison service as well because there are a few hoops for them to jump through to actually get in."

(Interview No 33, Prison, ViCSO, Scotland, Phase 2)

"We are relying on volunteers but that comes with its hurdles as well. When they first come in they haven't got keys, they can't hold radios, you are having to escort them in and out. It's very, very hard."

(Interview No 34, Prison, ViCSO, Wales, Phase 2)

In addition, some prison staff also talked about being unaware of which organisations would be able to support the needs of ex-service personnel in prison and their eligibility. In some cases, third sector organisations are unable to support prisons if funding runs out.

"It's really to pick out on this list, because I know not all of these can support, who could support them. And then if I can signpost them and me being the mediator, can pull it all together, I think that's my goal."

(Interview No 31, Prison, ViCSO, England, Phase 2)

It is important to note that this sentiment was not echoed in Scotland, where one stakeholder working in a prison reflected that the smaller number of establishments and more stable funding have led to more stable relationships.

"I was down in Leeds at a national conference for SSAFA and what we've heard is what we offer in Scotland, they strive to do in England, because we are small, only 11 establishments. Because the charities here are embedded… it's quite stable. we are able to use the charities or the support we've all grown together over the last 10-12 years to have an understanding."

(Interview No 35, Prison, ViCSO, Scotland, Phase 2)

Finally, Covid-19 seems to have affected engagement from third sector organisations in some of the prisons that were visited. It was mentioned that many caseworkers and volunteers who work for these organisations are older, making them particularly vulnerable and unable to work during a pandemic.

"A lot of the case workers for these charities are older generation. When you come out of Covid now, sadly a lot of them - ill health, death, don't want to be working… And again this environment, it's a difficult environment for people to come in."

(Interview No 28, Prison, ViCSO, Wales, Phase 2)

'When [charity] do come in - I know that they've not been in recently but that's mainly due to ill health because they rely on some old guys to come in, they are all volunteers. Unfortunately in the last couple of years they've had a succession of different people, volunteers are thin on the ground but they've had a succession of people who are a bit older, who have got health issues, and they've had to take time off for those health issues so they can't be here all the time. Hopefully, things will improve because they are a great service to have."

(Interview No 25, Prison, ViCSO, England, Phase 2)

5.6.1.3. Shortage of appropriate health support

Many of those interviewed described having mental health needs which developed in early life, or with age, and/or during their service in the Armed Forces. Mental health was also highlighted as a need by three out of four prison officials who completed the Phase 1 survey. The provision of health support across the prisons we visited varied and received largely negative feedback from ex-service personnel, barring the PTSD support provision from the charity PTSD Resolution.

"I think there needs to be a lot more opportunity for mental health support. There need to be things like cognitive behavioural therapy in here. I think people need to be dealing with the trauma and actually treating it inside here instead of just nurturing someone through their sentence and then trying to get it when they leave, which is when they are most vulnerable."

(Interview No 25, Prison, ViCSO, England, Phase 2)

"Mental health just stopped coming. They came once to see me and they said, 'Right, we'll get a case worker sorted while we get this rolling'. I waited but no-one (came)."

(Interview No 44, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

The Howard League's 2011 study suggested that ex-service personnel's mental health issues are "overshadowed" (p 8) by service-related PTSD. This was also highlighted in a number of our interviews. It is possible, therefore, that there has been limited attention paid to the mental health needs of ex-service personnel that do not fall under combat-related PTSD.

"I do find that not all mental health issues that veterans have would be PTSD. It's quite likely, it's I'm not dismissing mental health concerns at all, but it's, it's possible that they're being misdiagnosed."

(Interview No 36, Third Sector, England, Phase 2)

"You mention squaddie and you say 'mental health, squaddie', they'll say PTSD straight away, always on it. It's not always, it might be anxiety, it might be depression, the two are completely different things. No-one ever focuses on them, especially in the prison setting."

(Interview No 45, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

5.6.1.4 The general population in prisons and Vulnerable Prisoners (VP)[24] units and protection halls

One stakeholder in a dedicated ex-service personnel role particularly highlighted not being able to mix people from the 'main population' units with people in VP units or protection halls as a barrier to providing seamless support. It is important to note that there are many security concerns with mixing mains and VP populations in prisons.

> ***"We still don't have the facility, or we don't have the authorisation, to mix the mains and the VPs with regards to actual interventions together... You are a veteran, conviction doesn't matter in this place. We as an organisation have split them in two in here and I think that again needs to be refocused because if you look at open prisons, for mains and sexual offenders, they engage in the same areas."***
>
> *(Interview No 28, Prison, ViCSO, Wales, Phase 2)*

Some ex-service personnel also echo this sentiment, observing that some support activities may be inaccessible to those convicted of sexual offences.

> ***"At [Prison] it wasn't so bad but we couldn't go to veterans' meetings like we do here because it was mixed mains and VPs."***
>
> *(Interview No 43, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)*

5.6.1.5 Joint working within prisons

Joint working within prisons was cited by stakeholders in nearly all sites as a barrier to providing support. ViCSOs reported difficulties identifying staff in the prison who have the capacity and resources to help or identifying the correct people to work with due to changing staff or responsibilities or lack of knowledge.

> ***"That's another sad but true thing, you go to the people you know who are going to go out of their way to help you, not just to say, 'Don't ask me', or give you the wrong answer. You go to the people who are going to be positive and say, 'We can do that'... The other day one of the managers said, 'I'll put you in touch with this person, she's doing in-reach counselling, ex-services'. I thought brilliant, emailed her, 'No, I'm not doing that anymore'. It's very difficult."***
>
> *(Interview No 32, Prison, ViCSO, England, Phase 2)*

This barrier was felt by some to be even more pronounced in larger prisons due to complicated structures:

> ***"I'd love a more structured pathway plan for them to be released. The difficulty you have in the establishment is there are so many departments, especially in [Prison], it's such a large establishment. Your resettlement, your OMU, your social care, your veterans, whatever, the communication is very poor."***
>
> *(Interview No 28, Prison, ViCSO, Wales, Phase 2)*

In one prison in Scotland, the ViCSO came into post after the position had been vacant for a little while, and is restarting support programmes in the prison, highlighting the dependence on other members of staff to keep the programme running.

[24] Vulnerable Prisoners' Units, or VPUs/ VP units, are prison wings (in England and Wales) which house those who are at risk of harm from other residents, often due to the nature of their offending, gang affiliations, getting into debt in prison, or previous employment with the police or other law enforcement agencies. All ex-service personnel convicted of sexual offences who were interviewed for this report were housed in such wings. In Scottish prisons, as the residential areas are referred to as "Halls", vulnerable persons are categorised as in need of protection, and are housed in a specific Hall. For the purpose of this report we will refer to these halls as "protection halls". The rest of the residents are often termed as "mains" or "general" population, and for ease of clarity we will use the term, "mains".

"There was no veteran support - well, there was but I had nothing handed over to me and I had nobody handing over the job, I was just plopped in, 'Remembrance is just around the corner, we need somebody to do that job'. We've recently had a meeting with representatives from different parts - so, just one person from each part of the jail - and what I've decided I want to do with it, because my job now is I've put the ball in their court, I've said to them, 'What do you want to get out of having a veterans' officer? What sort of activities could we get you involved in that you think you would benefit from?'. So, are just really at the start of it and we're trying to take our time."

(Interview No 26, Prison, ViCSO, Scotland, Phase 2)

5.6.1.6 Communication and technological barriers

Prison environments create conditions for social isolation, which is exacerbated by the lack of internet access in these environments (Reisdorf & Jewkes, 2016). This gap, combined with an increased move from offline to online resources, appears to be an increasing barrier to identifying and accessing support options for ex-service personnel in prison custody.

"The Veterans' Gateway online shows the different services on what they can offer but it doesn't help the lads in here because they are not allowed to access to the internet."

(Interview No 27, Prison, ViCSO, England, Phase 2)

"Well, a lot of things are online now... Yes, we get things through from charities who say, 'To contact us, log on'. We can't do that, so that becomes a barrier for a lot of people."

(Interview No 16, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

"Everything is done on the internet that they can't look into, they can't read the information about it and then make a decision."

(Interview No 20, Prison, ViCSO, England, Phase 2)

"We're trying to get hold of the local SSAFA here. I know we don't have access to the computer so you've got to write letters to people and they've got to write back to you. Sometimes the forms come through to you and sometimes they don't..."

(Interview No 47, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Covid-19 pandemic significantly changed how prison regimes operated, with people in prison spending longer and longer hours in their cells, and in-person visits being suspended (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2021).

To ensure people in prison could stay in touch with their friends and families during lockdown, there was a push to increase the availability of in-cell phones in England and Wales, however by January 2023 only 64% of prisons in England and Wales had been fitted with in-cell phones (Prison Reform Trust, 2023). One of the prisons we visited in England did not have in-cell phones and one ex-service person summarised the impact this divide had on his day-to-day life.

"... the technological divide in prisons is ridiculous. I go to work all day, I have a job ... so, we've got about 35 minutes to try and get a phone call, and when you've got about 40 guys queuing for four phones you are not guaranteed a phone call, it's ridiculous. Then if you want a shower you can't have a phone call because you haven't got enough time for both so we've got to decide what you want to do. And then if you do either one of those then you've got no time to actually socialise with anybody."

(Interview No 48, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

This adds a further barrier to providing support services by telephone. It is important to note that technological and communication barriers are not unique to ex-service personnel but can impact military charities and other ex-service personnel-specific services that want to create support pathways for this cohort.

5.6.2 Individual barriers to support

5.6.2.1 Awareness of support and eligibility

Most ex-service personnel we interviewed mentioned that they only learnt about the support options available to them due to their ex-service personnel status after they arrived in prison. Some also reported that they had not been aware of services earlier in their journey through the prison system. There was a sense that they were "forgotten".

> ***"It's late now because I've now been in prison; this could all have been picked up beforehand. It was only in the last 18 months that a counsellor mentioned, 'It sounds to me like you may have complex PTSD'."***
>
> *(Interview No 49, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)*

> ***"I don't know if it would have [made a difference being offered support earlier in the process] or not but I wasn't made aware at any of the early stages that being a veteran actually mattered to anybody anymore."***
>
> *(Interview No 50, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)*

> ***'I've had better support in the jail for the veterans than I have on the outside.'***
>
> *(Interview No 51, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)*

With that context, lack of awareness of support poses a significant barrier to accessing support in prison, as ex-service personnel are known to be reluctant to seek help, which will be further discussed in section 5.6.2

The lack of awareness of what support is available is exacerbated by perceptions of *who* is eligible for support, wherein some participants believed they were not eligible for support due to their shorter service length, or lack of combat experience.

> ***"I was just chatting to one of my colleagues at the meeting this morning and he's due out this week. He doesn't know where he's going to be going. He's going through a lot of medical issues at the moment, and he thought Care After Combat was only significant for those that had been involved in combat, he didn't realise that you've only got to be an ex-veteran to be linked in. He thought he had to be actually in combat."***
>
> *(Interview No 52, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)*

> ***"I think that some people might say they are not a veteran if they haven't finished basic training, they might not see themselves as a veteran."***
>
> *(Interview No 53, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)*

5.6.2.2 Reluctance to seek support

Ex-service personnel are reluctant to ask for help, oftentimes as a consequence of resilience that is developed through service in the Armed Forces (Grand-Clement, *et al.*, 2020). This is compounded by perceptions of pride and masculinity that are fostered in the Armed Forces, which may cause some ex-service personnel to be more reluctant to seek help than the general population (McAllister, *et al.*, 2019). Prison staff and ex-service personnel we spoke to echoed these sentiments.

"I personally think the problem is a lot of the veterans in custody, this is just like being in the military, apart from you get locked in. You are in an environment where it's lads only; it's still got that macho image thing… I think if you could address that problem more, I don't know how, asking lads to be truthful and come forward and recognising their problems you would be a step closer to solving the problem, heading towards a solution."

(Interview No 54, Ex-service personnel, Community, England, Phase 2)

"[When asked about barriers to support] Your own self pride, your own pride. Because when you are in the Forces, to seek for help was a sign of weakness so I think it's stemmed into you back then so when you do come out, asking for help is really quite hard. I found it very hard to ask for help."

(Interview No 55, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

"In some respects I'm too proud to as well to ask for help. I got to change my outlook in life instead…"

(Interview No 56, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

This reluctance to seek help was noted within all stages of the criminal justice process during the research and was an emergent theme in Chapter 4 (Section 4.1) It will also be discussed in Chapter 6 detailing ex-service personnel's experience in the community either post-custody or after receiving a community sentence.

5.6.2.3 Dissatisfaction with inconsistent support options

Some of the ex-service personnel who were interviewed for this project spoke about some support options being inconsistent, which led them to disengage with the service. Many in the cohort we interviewed cited strong interpersonal relationships and trust as the only way through which they felt comfortable talking about their mental health and seeking support.

"But I only speak to one of them [NHS staff] because I've developed a trust with her. As I stated earlier on, I struggle with trust, I really struggle with trust."

(Interview No 37, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

Inconsistency contributes to a lack of faith in the support options available to ex-service personnel. As discussed in the previous section, this may be a result of difficulties in accessing prisons, or staffing and/or policy changes in third sector organisations as a result of Covid-19. However, inconsistency of support options can lead to ex-service personnel being reluctant to engage with the organisation again.

"I've looked for additional help and I did have a [Charity] leaflet and that's as far as it went because I think in the seven months I've been in this jail, I think [Charity], to my knowledge, have been here once and I never got to speak to them."

(Interview No 57, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"I'm not going to be using [charity] again. I do the collections for them in here with the veterans but I'm not going to bother with them again. If they aren't going to bother with me, I'm not going to bother with them."

(Interview No 34, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

5.7 Summary

The interviews with ex-service personnel and stakeholders in prison have shed light on the factors that impact ex-service personnel identifying themselves, and the institutional constraints that affect identification. Across all three nations in the prisons we visited, ex-service personnel were asked if they had served in the Armed Forces at reception and were presented with opportunities to identify themselves at other stages, such as induction and during medical assessments. Other tools that act as a motivator to self-identify as well as providing support included coffee mornings, extra gym sessions, and mental health support relating to service-related mental health concerns.

However, in the interviews, institutional and individual barriers emerged to identification and provision and take up of support. These included staffing constraints, relationships and capacity of ViCSOs; information sharing about the benefits of identification and the importance of having different opportunities to identify. Additionally, we were told about a lack of clarity on who qualified to identify as a 'veteran', as well as concern about anti-military sentiments. In interviews it emerged that often prison was the first time ex-service personnel were offered specific support, pointing to a general lack of awareness of support pathways normally available to all ex-service personnel. The common theme of ex-service personnel being reluctant to seek support was also identified here, as well as challenges around remote or inconsistent support options. Relationships with third sector organisations were seen as crucial to provide more tailored support for ex-service personnel, but due to a number of reasons, including Covid-19 and the general inaccessibility of prisons, the engagement of third sector support was mixed.

It is important to caveat that those we had interviewed had already identified themselves to prison staff. These interviews highlighted that the ex-service personnel we spoke to were not reluctant to identify themselves in a prison setting, as long as the conditions under which the identification is done are right.

6

Community supervision

6. Identification and support for ex-service personnel in the community

This chapter discusses the barriers to identification and uptake of support for ex-service personnel in the community. Ex-service personnel in the community, for the purpose of this report, are those who received community orders, or suspended sentence orders, or were released from prison and are under the supervision of the Probation Service or justice social work (JSW) in Scotland. This chapter will first discuss the identification of ex-service personnel in the community, barriers to identification, the support mechanisms available in the community, as well as the barriers to uptake of support.

6.1 Identification mechanisms in the community

The 2021 HMPPS published a new "Target Operating Model for probation services in England and Wales" (2021), which identified that ex-service personnel are a cohort "requiring tailored services". In order to identify ex-service personnel, we heard that in England and Wales, there is a question in the induction with probation and the diversity and inclusion form to find out if someone has served in the Armed Forces. This is in addition to any identification which may have taken place through preparation of pre-sentence reports (as mentioned in Chapter 4). It was not clear if the wording of the question is the same across all probation delivery units (PDUs), but it was echoed amongst the practitioners interviewed for this project that the question to identify ex-service personnel is a part of the induction process.

"At the start, when somebody is sentenced they come in for an induction, they have to be inducted within five days of sentence. There's a form that they fill in with their practitioner and it asks various different questions - ethnicity, religion, things like that, and part of that is also about whether they are a veteran, what forces they've been serving in and any numbers. I think they ask when they left and how long they were in for."

(Interview No 37, Probation, England, Phase 2)

"The first contact that anybody ever has with somebody on probation is we have to do an equality form - their name, date of birth, sexuality, the identifiable factors on them. And one of those questions is, 'Were you previously in the military and if so, what is your service number?"

(Interview No 10, Probation, England, Phase 2)

"... the first time we have a person come into contact with us is through the court stage where obviously our probation practitioners will help write court reports before they go for sentencing, and, at that stage they should be asked."

(Interview No 12, Probation, Wales, Phase 2)

It is important to note that if someone is given a community order, the question should be asked by the ex-service personnel's probation practitioner following sentencing, in addition to any questioning that may already have taken place by court probation practitioners. If someone is sentenced to a prison term, their induction with the probation practitioner who will supervise them on release will happen closer to the release date, and the terms of their sentence are instead discussed by offender managers in prison.

It was observed that most PDUs in England where we undertook interviews have begun to assign single points of contact (SPOCs) who specialise in identifying and supporting ex-service personnel. In Wales, there is a team of Armed Forces champions across the six PDUs across the nation.

"No, they've said that I'll be the Armed Forces SPOC, which is the special point of contact. But I think that's a new thing, I think they are only recently starting to get these positions."

(Interview No 10, Probation, England, Phase 2)

Of the Armed Forces champions in Wales, a stakeholder confirmed that the role is being "revamped" to drive up engagement:

"So, we haven't necessarily established full work yet, but you know we're getting there and that is to make sure that all of the practitioners in every sort of PDU or department are able to access information quickly and they know where to access the information..."

(Interview No 12, Probation, Wales, Phase 2)

In Scotland, justice social workers interview those going through the judicial process, for the purpose of writing a JSW report similar to pre-sentence reports. However, justice social workers interviewed for this project stated that asking about ex-service personnel status is not a question that is on the standard interview checklist:

"Interviewer: ... you've got a checklist of things you need to ask?

JSW2 : Well there is, but a veteran isn't one of them"

(Interview No 13, JSW, Scotland, Phase 2)

"I think it's not automatically on the system, there's nothing that would tick a box to say they are a veteran or whatever, but sometimes you can see from the information provided that they've been engaging with the service, it's specific for veterans."

(Interview No 5, Scotland, JSW, Phase 2)

In the Scottish context, as the questions cover employment history, past traumas, education, etc., there is an understanding that if an ex-service person wants to identify themselves, they would. Therefore, the interview should, in theory, help identify ex-service personnel.

6.2 Barriers to identification in the community

Probation practitioners and justice social workers interact with ex-service personnel in diverse contexts, such as, in courts, after a community order sentence is received, and/or when an ex-service personnel individual is close to their release from prison, and upon supervision following release from prison. There are therefore potentially multiple opportunities for identification. This section will first explore institutional barriers to identification, and then discuss barriers emerging from relationships with probation practitioners and/or justice social workers, as well as barriers emerging from self-perception.

6.2.1 Institutional barriers to identification

From the interviews with probation practitioners and justice social workers, institutional barriers to identification include: i) staffing challenges and constraints within the probation service in England and Wales, ii) recording and dissemination of information, iii) perceptions of and rapport with probation practitioners and justice social workers, and iv) timing of the question.

6.2.1.1 Staffing challenges and constraints in England and Wales

Similar to the staffing issues referenced in Chapter 5, some probation staff spoke of staffing issues and lack of resources impacting their ability to prioritise the identification of ex-service personnel and provision of tailored support. In 2021, the Chief Inspector of Probation in England and Wales reported 'chronic' staff shortages with half of positions in key grades in some areas unfilled[25].

"… we are incredibly stretched. We are in amber prioritising framework in Plymouth, we are really, really struggling with staff. So, yes, in best practice, six months before you'd meet with your case, you would get all that information [about ex-service personnel status]. In reality you are firefighting … I know for myself, I predominantly hold high risk cases so should be hoping they'd go to an approved premise accommodation. And we would hope that the work has been - that the links have happened in prison with the military stuff, the veteran stuff."

(Interview No 10, Probation, England, Phase 2)

"There's always time constraints of the probation officer or probation service officer. We are massively under resourced so, if you've got somebody that's very busy, are they going to appreciate the importance of highlighting that and then knowing what to do with it?"

(Interview No 37, Probation, England, Phase 2)

6.2.1.2 Recording and dissemination of information

It was discussed in interviews that the extent and consistency of identification information being recorded on the system was not clear across the probation sites where practitioners were interviewed. For justice social workers based out of Edinburgh, it was confirmed that the question about identification is not formally asked as part of the interviewing processes which could have implications for recording information regarding service status.

One probation practitioner in England recognised recording information formally and on systems is a possible gap.

"Where it maybe does fall down a little bit - and it's maybe an internal recording issue - is when we do identify the veteran it's what do we do with that information? We do have a process within our Delius system, which is our database for our clientele, and within the personal circumstances we've got an area there which you put the information in there if you identify if somebody is a veteran. Now, if you put that in there we can then run a report to see how many veterans we've got in our books in the area. The only difficulty I'm finding, and again it's something I keep reminding periodically, is we ask the question really, really well, people forget to put it into their area."

(Interview No 39, Probation, England, Phase 2)

[25] HMIP Press Release, accessed on 10 August 2023: https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/media/press-releases/2022/05/jsc-statement/

One JSW staff member in Scotland, who conducts diversion from prosecution assessments[26] spoke of the potential of identifying ex-service personnel in the early stages.

"The police throughout the conversation with the person, might identify themselves [ex-service personnel] as being a veteran but that's really the only reason it's come to my attention before, in diversion from prosecution. But it's not been a tick box - you tick if someone is male, female, their address, other things or phone number. Yes, there is an occupation, but a veteran? No. Maybe it could be something that in future we could - I don't know about getting that done but it would be good to identify them in the [police custody] cells even."

(Interview No 5, Scotland, JSW, Phase 2)

The lack of consistency in the framing of the question, and then recording it would imply that even if ex-service personnel identified themselves during the pre-sentence report or JSW interview, then, potentially, after sentencing their assigned probation practitioner or justice social worker may not receive the information relating to their identification.

"We're good at that [passing information] within the team but I think veteran specific, no there's not a lot of that. I think we're probably quite broad just looking at anything that's about social inclusion."

(Interview No 13, JSW, Scotland, Phase 2)

This barrier was less evident in Durham, where probation practitioners explained that the recording of ex-service personnel status is quite consistent. However, it was said that this may be a more recent development.

"I think the flag [ex-service personnel status] has actually only been a recent thing that's been introduced because I think over the last four months we've been told to put the flags on. So, it's not been something… It's just been something that I've recently been asked to put on so don't know whether … it's been there the whole time.'

(Interview No 40, Probation, England, Phase 2)

They added that if someone is being released from prison custody, probation practitioners will already be aware of ex-service personnel (provided they were identified in prison).

"Everybody has to have an induction as well and it's within a certain amount of days. It's not something that you could do at any point, you've got release induction the day of release or the day after. But if someone's been released from custody you are going to know that they are a veteran before they are released anyway."

(Interview No 40, Probation, England, Phase 2)

[26] Diversion from prosecution in the Scottish criminal justice system is defined as: "the process by which Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) refers an accused person to local authority JSW (or a partner agency) for support, treatment or other action as a means of addressing the underlying causes of the alleged offending and preventing further offending". Source: Scottish Government. Accessed October 2023: https://www.gov.scot/publications/joint-review-diversion-prosecution/pages/5/

6.2.1.3 Perceptions of and rapport with probation practitioners and justice social workers

Some ex-service personnel spoke of negative perceptions of probation practitioners and justice social workers, as they felt that probation practitioners do not care if they are ex-military. This sentiment was especially strong among those we interviewed in Scotland, where justice social workers were seen as unsupportive and dismissive by most ex-service personnel we interviewed.

"Yes, he didn't care, they don't care less. They just think you are a bad person."

(Interview No 58, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)

"I don't think they take it as seriously. I don't think they look on it and give it the respect that it deserves. Really specifically, criminal justice social workers are not there to help and I think that's something they need to be educated on as well, when they are dealing with veterans that there are other avenues of support that they need to be maybe looking at instead of just being nasty people."

(Interview No 59, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

"I think their attitude is more towards the offences as opposed towards being a veteran. They have it in their mind that you have been found guilty so, you must be guilty… so because I'm maintaining my innocence the attitude from the criminal justice social workers are I'm being obtuse or I'm being obstructive or whatever."

(Interview No 60, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

One ex-service person spoke of feeling judged when they disclosed that they were ex-services to a justice social worker.

"No. In fact she was rather stand-offish about it. When I mentioned I'd served in the Armed Forces it was like… 'Yes, I see plenty of Armed Forces veterans in front of me."

(Interview No 6, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

6.2.1.4 Timing of the question

Some practitioners and ex-service personnel in England and Wales reported that the timing of the identification question can be important. While the question may be asked during the induction process, it may take more time to develop rapport and service history might be disclosed at a later point when they are more familiar with the practitioner and there may be less pressure.

"Yes, potentially it's not going to be at the forefront of that probation officer or probation services officer's mind at the current stage. I guess you are also then getting into the grounds of how quickly to develop rapport for that veteran to be able to disclose it in quite a short space of time, there's lots of information to be shared. So, I guess that's one of the barriers, both at court but also, their induction appointment as well. Sometimes it can be that it comes out later."

(Interview No 37, Probation, England, Phase 2)

"When they are stable enough to say, when they are in the right position. Because [when ex-service personnel] enter the justice system obviously their head is a bit all over the place. But when they start to settle down, that's the best time to do an interview, to say what's gone on, what happened, whatever."

(Interview No 61, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Community, Phase 2)

In Durham and Hull, we heard that due to the standardisation of the probation induction process, the question is asked as part of the induction pack, both in cases of community sentences as well as in cases where someone is released from prison custody.

"So, we have a clear process of the first appointment through the door, when they do their induction paperwork, and that can be people either coming out of prison or on a community order route straight from court, but everybody gets that same induction paperwork."

(Interview No 41, Probation, England, Phase 2)

"So if we miss it at court, which we shouldn't do - but sometimes veterans don't want to identify themselves - if [someone is given a] community order or somebody [is] sent to prison and we pick it up after that."

(Interview No 39, Probation, England, Phase 2)

One practitioner suggested that the diversity form could be revisited:

"There may be some kind of prompt, whether it's at the three month or the six-month point, to revisit a diversity form, I guess. Other things on that diversity form are things like having been in care, care leavers, which is a huge priority for us to identify as well. I don't know whether people will always answer that truthfully on the first meeting for various reasons, or whether that should be revisited."

(Interview No 41, Probation, England, Phase 2)

6.2.2 Individual barriers to identification

6.2.2.1 Shame

Some of the stakeholders interviewed cited shame and embarrassment as barriers to identification, indeed these findings are reflected in the literature (HLPR, 2011; Grand-Clement, *et al.*, 2020).

"Yes, there's a level of embarrassment from the veteran as well, that they've had -- I saw something the other day about 'hero to zero', that when they are in the Armed Forces they are seen as hero and now they are appearing in court, and that's difficult."

(Interview No 37, Probation, England, Phase 2)

However, it is important to note here that of the 104 ex-service personnel who were interviewed for this project, only a very small number echoed these feelings of shame and embarrassment. Of course, by its very nature, this group had already disclosed that they had served in the Armed Forces so we are not able to conclude that shame and embarrassment are not important factors, but it is nevertheless notable that there was such little reference to it by ex-service personnel themselves.

One probation practitioner interviewed affirmed that they did not experience any hesitation from ex-service personnel when asked the question about their service history:

"I have never had anyone that's been reluctant to tell me if they've been in the Army or other forces. I think it's more after that that they give you their opinion on their personal experience, but they've never really been reluctant telling us."

(Interview No 40, Probation, England, Phase 2)

6.2.2.2 Legitimacy as 'veteran' and who qualifies

Some ex-service personnel may not see themselves as part of the community due to the associations people make with the term 'veteran':

"Some of our veterans maybe don't want to identify themselves as veterans, for whatever reason, and some probably don't realise they are a veteran. We've got certainly some of the young men coming out of the Armed Forces and I think the view is, 'A veteran is them that served in the Second World War', and they don't class themselves as that. Whereas the work I do with my colleagues is let's remind them that the fact that they've maybe only done one day's paid service entitles them to veteran status. And it's maybe educating some of our younger veterans coming out as well that they are, they do meet these criteria."

(Interview No 39, Probation, England, Phase 2)

Perceptions of who qualifies as a 'veteran' may lead ex-service personnel to not identify themselves. Such individual barriers have implications for the uptake of support, which will be discussed in the next section.

6.3. Support in the community and through-the-gate from prison

Information about, referral to, and take up of available support varied greatly across local sites, with some ex-service personnel affirming that they were referred to appropriate services through their practitioners[27].

Ex-service personnel said that they had received some support through probation.

> ***"Yes, she asked if I was a veteran, I said yes and she said there's plenty of help out there if you need it - SSAFA and that. Of course, they've all got together now so, it's even a bigger hub now."***
>
> *(Interview No 62, Ex-service personnel, England, Community, Phase 2)*

In some cases, ex-service personnel had mixed experiences with probation practitioners. For example, in Plymouth (which has a high population of ex-service personnel), one ex-service personnel serving a suspended sentence spoke about the difference a more 'veteran-informed' probation practitioner made:

> ***"… I've seen a different probation officer before [current probation practitioner] and she was a bit different to how [current probation practitioner] approaches things. [She]'s a bit more full on, in a good way, the kind of person I'd really chat with, she's sound… [She]'s been a lot better and because she knows a bit more about the military she's more aware of the support systems out there."***
>
> *(Interview No 63, Ex-service personnel, England, Community, Phase 2)*

As mentioned earlier there seems to be no universal experience of support. One of those interviewed reported that they had not received any support from probation on their first release from prison but had extensive support on their second release. This was partly through probation but also, through co-ordination and engagement from other agencies, such as Care After Combat and Project Nova.

> ***"…my probation officer was following me when he knew I was coming out; Care After Combat and [Project Nova] but I've had loads of support this time."***
>
> *(Interview No 64, Ex-service personnel, England, Community, Phase 2)*

In Edinburgh, quite a few ex-service personnel who had previously been supervised by justice social workers held negative views of JSW in general:

> ***"No mention of any of it, none whatsoever. There is even in one report some doubt as to whether I was actually in the Army or not. I don't know where they got that from but that's what's written down, it's there in black and white… these people aren't important to my life because they don't offer any kind of support. The only thing they are interested in is getting you on a course… You get these wee smiley faces, sad faces and 'How does this make you feel? Tick the box'"***
>
> *(Interview No 65, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)*

[27] It is important to caveat here that it was not possible to recruit ex-service personnel in the community in Scotland, therefore Scottish perspectives in this section are based off of the experiences of ex-service personnel in prison custody, as well as stakeholder interviews.

"Social workers in here - speaking freely - don't have a clue. They don't."

(Interview No 16, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

Similarly, in Plymouth, an ex-service personnel in prison custody echoed negative experiences with a probation practitioner:

"No [not offered support], she was more still trying to make me feel guilty, which I already felt anyway."

(Interview No 66, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

Stakeholder interviews illustrated a more local approach to support: while some probation practitioners supported referring ex-service personnel to dedicated organisations, others echoed that unless necessary, existing networks could provide appropriate support, even if they are not specific to ex-service personnel.

"For veterans we would then link to the more specific organisations… and I found some community hubs where veterans could go on a Saturday morning for a bacon sandwich and a cup of tea, that lower level, building a bit of a support network for people."

(Interview No 41, Probation, England, Phase 2)

"[It is asked] Were you previously in the military and if so, what is your service number?' However, [they] don't necessarily get treated differently or offered specific support – Honestly, and I will be honest, I think it is irrelevant, from the probation's perspective, if they are ex-military unless you are doing interventions with them."

(Interview No 10, Probation, England, Phase 2)

Upon identification, some probation practitioners made references to addressing needs that may arise due to combat-related PTSD:

"It's [support] going to be different depending on that individual but if they've gone through trauma, so, if there's PTSD, there's lots of things around there that we might not necessarily understand in terms of certain times of the year might be difficult. I had one case when I was working in Sudbury where … bonfire night was always difficult for them. So, I'd make sure that I'd go and check on them the day before, just what strategies have they got in place. So, it's just having that awareness of them as an individual and what needs they've got."

(Interview No 37, Probation, England, Phase 2)

Practitioners shared how they worked with health services in England and Wales (NHS), and Veterans' First Point in Scotland delivered by NHS Scotland.

"I think it's within the NHS but we can have support from them to say that 'this is how you would work with this situation'. I'm actually in touch with them at the moment because one of mine is going through a little bit of a mental health crisis. So, I'm working with them now and they are going to come in and show me, hopefully help, with how to work with him better."

(Interview No 40, Probation, England, Phase 2)

"… he [ex-service personnel] finds Veterans First great because that's a common sort of place for him. They can offer support to Army veterans which might be more easily accessible and quicker for them than it might be just going generically through the NHS because (name) has been able to access therapy. He's only on a waiting list for a month through Veterans First."

(Interview No 13, JSW, Scotland, Phase 2)

As highlighted in earlier chapters, in April 2023 NHS England commissioned the Forces Employment Charity to deliver Op NOVA which provides pre- and post-prison support services for ex-service personnel. As the organisation was very recently commissioned by the NHS (April 2023), reflections on the service do not feature in the interviews; however, it is relevant as another nationally commissioned specialist service[28].

As with Liaison and Diversion services, we heard that there was a focus on ex-service personnel as a specific cohort in the recently introduced RECONNECT programme which supports people leaving prison with health needs. Commissioned by NHS England, RECONNECT aims to ensure prison leavers with an identified health need are integrated with their local health economy through joint working with probation services. We were told that ex-service personnel would be recognised as a separate cohort with a prescribed set of needs that can help inform their resettlement plan within the context of RECONNECT.

"... currently within our RECONNECT Programme... we're also, doing a lot of work with RECONNECT to make sure we've got very similar processes that we have in Liaison and Diversion so that veterans who are exiting custody get the same access to support and healthcare that they require. Recognising veterans as a specific cohort, that have a prescribed set of needs and how do we meet their needs as they are resettled."

(Interview No. 28, Health and Justice, England, Phase 1)

Probation and JSW staff told us about liaising with specific housing support in some of the local sites, namely Edinburgh, Durham, and Hull. In Durham, the Armed Forces Outreach Service works closely with the local authority to provide housing for ex-service personnel:

"We have the Armed Forces Outreach Service, which is the County Durham outreach workers, so, we've got two named people and a manager. They do a lot of support around housing; they are actually embedded in the local authority housing unit. There are two officers who really just do a lot of support with housing or helping people with funding around housing or if they are at risk of getting evicted and those things. So, it's quite fixed on housing"

(Interview No 41, Probation, England, Phase 2)

"In Edinburgh specifically, a very Edinburgh specific problem is housing and it's well known that we have next to no social housing. [named ex-service personnel] is very fortunate that he has veteran housing; he has a lovely place which he's very proud of but that's through Scottish Veterans [Residences], that's not to do with the council."

(Interview No 13, JSW, Scotland, Phase 2)

The organisation referred to here is Scottish Veterans Residences, which operates Whitefoord House in Edinburgh, which is an ex-service personnel-specific housing support service[29].

The support landscape for ex-service personnel in the community varies significantly. The barriers to provision and uptake of support will be discussed extensively in the next section.

6.4 Barriers to provision and uptake of support

6.4.1 Institutional barriers to support

6.4.1.1 Complex landscape and awareness amongst practitioners of support available

A significant institutional barrier to emerge from the interviews was a lack of awareness among some probation and JSW practitioners about the support available for ex-service personnel.

[28] Source: Forces Employment Charity. Accessed October 2023: https://www.forcesemployment.org.uk/news/op-nova-delivered-by-the-forces-employment-charity/
[29] Source: Scottish Veterans' Residences. Accessed October 2023: https://www.svronline.org/

"Ideally we need a lot more awareness and knowledge of what is out there and hopefully that's what I'll be looking at. But we need agencies to contact us as well, so, if they are linked to veterans let us know, 'Let us know what support you can provide; it shouldn't be just a one way avenue of communication, come to us and we'll set something up, well set up a team meeting'. There need to be closer links with the council in terms of housing; closer links with things like education providers, both for their children but also, our own training needs for education. Potentially specific substance misuse and mental health support that's designed just for veterans and their experiences."

(Interview No 37, Probation, England, Phase 2)

It was also highlighted that information about supporting ex-service personnel was not easily available on the platforms used by the Probation Service.

"A lot of what we do, as probation practitioners, is off our own back, trying to find stuff. Then, over a period of time in being in probation you get a folder of all this information. But there's not something like - We've got a platform called EQuiP[30], which is like our bible, so, any policy, procedures. There's not much on there for people in the Armed Forces."

(Interview No 10, Probation, England, Phase 2)

One of the key findings of Phase 1 of this research project was that there appears to be a range of services and funding available for ex-service personnel across England, Wales, and Scotland. A barrier to providing support was therefore not thought to be the availability of resources, but rather how to provide a service landscape that is understood by ex-service personnel encountering the CJS. The analysis revealed the service landscape could be overwhelming for both ex-service personnel and stakeholders due to the volume of services.

"We've got too many charities, I'll say that straight away, certainly in Hull. We have charities fighting over each other"

(Interview No 13, Police, England, Phase 1)

"I think it's quite a muddled picture out there, it's quite a complicated landscape… but I think, potentially, we have too many veteran support agencies"

(Interview No 19, Police, England, Phase 1)

In Phase 2 it was highlighted that in a community setting, third sector organisations have more avenues to reach out to ex-service personnel than they would in a prison environment, as was discussed in Chapter 5. A challenge for probation and JSW staff therefore, is to be aware of ex-service personnel-specific support, as currently there does not seem to be a coordinated ex-service personnel pathway.

"Yes, I don't know of any specific veteran support through social work, no. I think we have to accept our own limitations within our role. A lot of what we do within criminal justice is referring on to other places because we cannot do it all. If I'd one person on my case load who I could give all my time to, it would be great, but I don't. And you also have to accept that people on our caseloads have families and jobs and hobbies and they don't always want to be just doing the supervision, they have other things to go and do".

(Interview No 13, JSW, Scotland, Phase 2)

"I'm not aware of really any specialised service that we provide just because somebody is a veteran. Perhaps probation officers are not particularly well trained with regard to what people need when they come out of the forces."

(Interview No 42, Probation, England, Phase 2)

[30] Excellence and Quality in Process (EQuiP)" from "EQuiP is a probation service web-based national resource providing consistent information about the processes to be followed in all aspects of probation work

6.4.1.2 Staffing challenges within the Probation Service (England and Wales)

While staffing emerged as a barrier to identification, the strain on the probation service also seemed to create barriers for ex-service personnel to receive adequate support. It is important to caveat here that such issues may be experienced by everyone on probation, not just ex-service personnel, but it reduces the opportunities for them to receive specific support.

"He contacted me in prison the first time and said, 'We are going to do this, we're going to do that, we are going to do this for your mental health', and then he just - He might have had his own problems; he sounded stressed out and had a massive caseload but if you want people to be rehabilitated then someone has to take responsibility and follow that person and be a point of contact."

(Interview No 64, Ex-service personnel, England, Community, Phase 2)

'Just the way she connects. I understand probation, their caseloads are massive and they can't do everything for everyone but some of them have very little to no interest and all they want to do is recall you. They are interested when you are doing something wrong but when you need help the interest goes".'

(Interview No 1, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)

From a stakeholder perspective, there were also comments about the strain on time and resources to promote awareness of support networks for ex-service personnel.

'Yes, and I do want to get a few more people because I think one person is not enough. I think we need another probation officer; we need probably an admin as well, just to help collate things and potentially put different events on or different forums"

(Interview No 37, Probation, England, Phase 2)

"The [probation] officer - I want to say [Name] - I met her at [Name] solicitor's launch of their veteran signing of the Covenant and I spoke to her and it was still at the time a bolt-on. She had interest but that wasn't a focus so, …."

(Interview No 43, Third sector, Wales, Phase 2)

6.4.1.3 Other concerns of higher priority

Interviews with probation practitioners and justice social workers highlighted that being ex-services might not be considered the most pressing concern at the beginning of engagement due to specific risk factors that need to be addressed first. If there is immediate instability, for example because of substance misuse, mental health, or accommodation needs, their status as ex-service personnel may be considered as secondary.

"So, you may take a client who is ex-Army but that might not be your first concern as such because if that individual is homeless and drug or alcohol dependent, then that's where you are going to have to go immediately… so are focussing on the very immediate risks that present. And I think once those are in place we may start to look at what's more specific to that person and my experience with a veteran is although they like the support you may get from somebody like myself it's not veteran specific in any way, shape or form and that's fine. That's what it is, you have to understand that".

(Interview No 13, JSW, Scotland, Phase 2)

"So, I think that's the biggest, biggest barrier we have. If we have got a veteran who is homeless, I think it's very difficult to engage them in the other services we've got because the priority is finding that accommodation."

(Interview No 39, Probation, England, Phase 2)

6.4.1.4 Need for appropriate and specialist support for mental health and substance misuse issues

Rhead *et al.* (2020) detailed the heavy usage of alcohol among men serving in the UK Armed Forces, with a negative impact on mental health. Consequently, a general resettlement need highlighted in the literature as well as the interviews for this project reflected the substance misuse and mental health needs that are somewhat unique for ex-service personnel (Kelly, 2014).

Probation practitioners spoke of ex-service personnel with mental health issues and the importance of having specialist support, particularly highlighting support needed for those with combat-related mental health needs. This can create a barrier for practitioners themselves as they told us of needing guidance on working with ex-service personnel with such issues. One spoke of their concern about causing further harm as they feel they are not equipped or skilled in dealing with combat-related trauma.

> ***"For example, they come back from a war zone, they come straight out of that war zone and then they go to their families and home. I think they get a couple of days where they just settle down. There's no therapy, there's nothing to do. And then when they come to me because they've committed a crime, I'm not qualified to undo that kind of trauma and I wouldn't touch it with a barge pole because I could potentially make it worse. So, it's really difficult."***
>
> *(Interview No 10, Probation, England, Phase 2)*

While many ex-service personnel do not see combat and therefore do not experience combat-related PTSD, it was highlighted that those whose mental health issues are exacerbated by combat exposure have unique mental health needs. Nearly 20% of the ex-service personnel we interviewed mentioned their struggles with PTSD. One ex-service person in the community, who had been in active combat, also highlighted difficulties in accessing mental health support that adequately supports them within the context of their service history:

> ***"Yes - what happened, happened. I'd say if the NHS had done more before I got sick then I don't think - I've read the reports back now and I was clearly not very well at all. The NHS don't really know how to deal with - I don't know about other PTSD but PTSD that comes from the military and hostile environments. They pass you from pillar to post, it's always been like that."***
>
> *(Interview No 67, Ex-service personnel, England, Community, Phase 2)*

A probation practitioner from a different area suggested that their service would benefit from having specialised mental health and substance misuse support for ex-service personnel within their team.

> ***"Potentially specific substance misuse and mental health support that's designed just for veterans and their experiences. … And the mental health team as well, having a special veteran SPOC in the mental health team [would be helpful]."***
>
> *(Interview No 37, Probation, England, Phase 2)*

6.4.1.5 Limited responsiveness to requests for support

Some ex-service personnel told us they proactively tried to seek support from probation practitioners, but they had found them difficult to engage with or gain support from at the time they needed.

"Yes, they came to see me this week after two months of nagging them."

(Interview No 20, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)

"Never been in touch with me since she recalled me. There has been no rehabilitation there from day 1. I've had to swap them. It's not only me who's tried to contact them; members of the veteran staff have tried to contact them, no interest."

(Interview No 68, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

Some ex-service personnel who were interviewed in prison were critical of the timing of the support they could access. Inevitably, for those who were in prison, probation and JSW staff focus on getting appropriate support in place for release. However, ex-service personnel did not always view this as helpful and highlighted that a lot of the available support was not accessible whilst they were in prison.

"Yes they did [provide support options], they gave me a list of organisations that I would be able to use to help but it was organisations that would be able to be used to help after my sentence has passed, not necessarily during."

(Interview No 37, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

"I was asking the probation and I was asking my solicitor and no-one was helping me at all. It's only now when you get in trouble they want to help you. And it's like, 'Why didn't you help me when I wasn't in trouble?"

(Interview No 58, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)

6.4.1.6 Restricted support for those convicted of sexual offences

A theme that emerged from Phase 1 interviews, was that nationally there seemed to be difficulty identifying which services would work with people convicted of sexual offences. Since a higher proportion of ex-service personnel in prison have been convicted of sexual offences as compared to the general population (HM Inspectorates of Prisons, 2014), providing support pathways to this cohort is crucial to ensure successful rehabilitation. People convicted of sexual offences are likely to have strict licence conditions and restrictions that organisations may find difficult to work with. It was reported that some organisations are reluctant to work with people because of the nature of their offence, a reluctance that is perhaps influenced by the size and local scope of the charity.

"As I said, you've got the restrictions that come with the licence, you've got the fact that they are a sex offender and a lot of military organisations, they don't like that."

(Interview No 22, Prisons, Wales, Phase 1)

"Yes, I know that the big ones like Nova and the Legion, they won't discriminate but the more local ones, services, they will be very subjective about them and will refuse to help people that have committed sexual offences and that's wrong, really."

(Interview No 23, Police, England, Phase 1)

Phase 2 of this research therefore aimed to understand what support pathways for ex-service personnel convicted of sexual offences looked like. Chapter 7 provides more detail into the barriers in the third sector landscape that make provision of services for those convicted of sexual offences more challenging.

Some probation practitioners who were interviewed highlighted a particular obstacle for transitioning to civilian life post-custody was being able to gain employment with a history of sexual offending, especially in cases where there were limited options to be in skilled employment.

"Say for D-, he's very educated, he's very capable, he's very qualified to do many jobs. He was a sergeant in the Royal Marines. Who would employ somebody that has a sexual conviction, that has media interest that - you type D-s name into google and he comes up with all his offences… He wants to go into an electrician job, engineering. And I was like, 'I can't authorise you going into that job where you are going into people's houses and they don't know you are a registered sex offender."

(Interview No 10, Probation, England, Phase 2)

While housing is recognised as a universal need for those leaving prison, those convicted of sexual offences face further housing barriers due to their licence conditions (The Howard League for Penal Reform, 2016). For one ex-service person, coordinating between his public protection officer and the charity that was assisting him made it difficult for him to secure housing upon release:

"The thing about it is as well with us - as a sex offender we've got a public protection officer. So I go to see your property, have a look round and think this is ideal. We have got restrictions… So you work that out yourself, you look it up, no schools in the area etc. But we have then got to get in contact with your public protection officer and say, 'I've found a property', give him the address. 'Right I'll check it out', and off he goes. He might not get back to you for two days. And then once he's got that then you have to get on to [Charity] and they are going to take another week. So all this time you are waiting and the landlord's getting, 'I can't have this'"

(Interview No 69, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

6.4.2 Individual barriers to support

Individual barriers to support are no different in respect of support in the community from the barriers to uptake of support observed in earlier chapters. These barriers included help-seeking behaviours, awareness, and building trust.

6.4.2.1 Reluctance to ask for help and lack of awareness of services

It has been well-documented in the literature that ex-service personnel often do not seek help (Grand-Clement, *et al.*, 2020; Murray, *et al.*, 2022). The Armed Forces often instil resilience within service personnel, leading them to believe they must address their problems on their own (Grand-Clement, *et al.*, 2020), a finding which echoes our observations earlier in this report in Chapter 5.

Concerns about masculinity and pride also prevent ex-service personnel from seeking help, highlighting that resilience and avoiding help can often be a consequence of masculine stereotypes.

"… I never told anyone I'd got PTSD before because I didn't think it's a macho thing to have so I've never really spoken about it."

(Interview No 54, Ex-service personnel, Community, England, Phase 2)

We were told that ex-service personnel's reluctance to seek help was also compounded by a general lack of awareness or knowledge of what support is available.

"It's the lack of knowledge, I guess, it's lack of knowledge of what support there is. You've got that pride getting in the way of them accessing help, thinking that they should be able to do this themselves."

(Interview No 37, Probation, England, Phase 2)

6.4.2.2 Need to independently engage with services

Some professionals highlighted that it is up to the ex-service personnel to take the steps to access support; probation only signpost them to it. Beyond that stage, the take-up of support is self-directed, which for reasons mentioned earlier may pose a significant challenge to ex-service personnel.

"And some people just have to wait until they are ready. [Name] didn't go to Veterans First [Point] immediately, it took him a month of going and almost walking to the front door and leaving because he was so stressed out, he finds it really stressful meeting new people. So I have to meet people where they are at. He eventually went in his own time and now he finds it really beneficial".

(Interview No 13, JSW, Scotland, Phase 2)

"It's something that we would say to a service user, 'Maybe you could link in with the Royal British Legion', but then we don't technically get involved with that side of things, it's just left between the two. At least that's my side of things anyway".

(Interview No 40, Probation, England, Phase 2)

One ex-service person on probation echoed the value of probation consistently encouraging them to receive support, highlighting that they've struggled with asking for help in the past.

"Yes, probation is making me go. Not 'making me go' but probation has talked me into going. I can't remember the exact name of it but it's somewhere in the Borders. It used to be a stately home and it's a resettlement programme for people with PTSD. They want me to go there. He's already touched base with them and everything… Probation's helped me massively with that kind of thing. They did years ago, when I got released in 2014, my probation officer was brilliant. But I just blagged them and said nothing was wrong with me but it was".

(Interview No 54, Ex-service personnel, Community, England, Phase 2)

6.4.2.3 Building trust and continuity

Chapter 5 discussed that it may take some time before ex-service personnel can trust prison staff. This view was also echoed by some probation practitioners, with agreement that staff members who are also ex-service personnel may build trusting relationships more quickly.

"Again, one of the other barriers is - where I do have an advantage over some of my colleagues is because I am from a forces background. I've got that understanding, I've got that knowledge; I know probably a lot of areas where some of these servicemen or newer servicemen have served because I've been there myself, so, I've got that common ground, and I do it myself, you can't really understand if you haven't been there … so I think there is still that barrier of, 'Well I'm a veteran and you are not so how would you know?'"

(Interview No 39, Probation, England, Phase 2)

"I know from other people's cases, it can be hit and miss which probation officer you get. Luckily mine's ex-military and he's been to the same places as me and so yes, he signposted me really well"

(Interview No 67, Ex-service personnel, England, Community, Phase 2)

Some probation practitioners and justice social workers reflected that ex-service personnel tend to like consistency and it can take time to build trust. Therefore, a change in probation practitioner or justice social worker may be more unsettling for them than for others.

"My experience with [Name] is he likes continuity. I think if he was now just allocated to another worker he'd hate it because he's just so, used to me and I think we've built a very good relationship but it's taken five months. And I think if I was taken away from him and he was plonked with somebody else, which does happen because of staffing and people leaving, I think he would find that really hard to cope with."

(Interview No 13, JSW, Scotland, Phase 2)

"I think working with veterans though, they take a bit longer. I don't know whether it's for them to trust you or whether it's to let their guard down a bit, but it does take a bit longer before you seem to get a bit more out of them, before they do start asking for help. One of my cases I've had for two years, since I started, and it's only really recently that he'll come in and ask for help."

(Interview No 40, Probation, England, Phase 2)

6.5 Summary

Identification of ex-service personnel in the community varies across the three nations, with evidence suggesting that a more standardised approach has been adopted in England and Wales in terms of asking the question whether someone has served. Although we heard that the process of asking the question was established in some areas of England and Wales, it wasn't clear that this was consistent across the nations. In Scotland, while we heard that practitioners sought to accurately gauge someone's past experiences and background, we heard that there was no direct identification question as part of the standard JSW questions.

Staffing challenges in England and Wales were identified as a particular barrier to identification and support, as well as relationships with practitioners in probation and JSW. The need for different opportunities for identification emerged as people highlighted that service history may not be disclosed in the first meeting and may not lead to identification. Other barriers included how information was recorded and the impact of that recording. And, as has been highlighted in other chapters, clarity on who qualifies for support and what length or type of service is 'legitimate' seems to be important.

Awareness of services and who they can help was identified as a significant issue for practitioners and ex-service personnel, which seemed to be influenced both by the number of different services available as well as capacity challenges.

In some cases, ex-service personnel status seemed to be considered as secondary to other urgent needs. While this is understandable, this may close down avenues for ex-service personnel specific support in those areas such as housing or mental health. This seemed to be the case in Scotland, although from the interviews, we saw an awareness of the existing ex-service personnel support landscape.

In England, there was a mixed response as to the general awareness of services which could assist ex-service personnel in the community, and it appears that there are significant gaps and opportunities to increase the awareness, knowledge and approach of probation staff in supporting ex-service personnel. In Wales, the appointment of Armed Forces Champions seems to have created more awareness of services, although it can be difficult to gauge in what geographic areas the services operate. The complex landscape and lack of awareness of appropriate services in England and Wales appeared to sometimes make it difficult to create a targeted response to the needs of ex-service personnel. This was also highlighted as an issue for ex-service personnel convicted of sexual offences where there appeared to be a lack of clarity about which services were available to them.

The following chapter will explore the support provision by third sector organisations in greater detail.

7

Third sector organisations

7. Third sector organisations: Existing support and barriers to provision

Previous research found that third sector support networks are crucial to delivering much-needed services to ex-service personnel, especially those who have unique needs emerging from contact with the CJS (Robson, et al., 2019). Some third sector stakeholders interviewed for this project spoke about how having a strong support network can improve outcomes for ex-service personnel in the CJS.

"If you build that support network before they come out and then they know they've got that safety net, we can build on that."

(Interview No 44, Third sector, England, Phase 2)

"From my experience the more support that you put round a person, the more they are going to succeed in what they're doing… the best way to support somebody, to stop them reoffending…it's to have specific goals and working towards them, that's giving that person motivation to do that and prisons to do that. But if you are just putting somebody into a home as accommodation, I just think sometimes it can just be a way back in."

(Interview No 45, Third sector, Scotland, Phase 2)

Some ex-service personnel who were interviewed echoed this sentiment, both post-custody as well as people serving community orders.

"I keep myself busy but you do get lonely. The problem is having some support out there afterwards where you could just get on the phone and say, 'I'm feeling a bit pissed off'. Help from ex-forces if you like, a central point where you could ring in."

(Interview No 69, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"Meet up once a week or whatever, have a cup of tea or coffee and have a chinwag, a catch up and talk about things, positive type of things… I don't know, maybe something like [the Royal] British Legion."

(Interview No 70, Ex-service personnel, Community, Wales, Phase 2)

The Directory of Social Change in 2019 noted that Armed Forces charities frequently collaborate with each other. Some of the third sector organisations we interviewed also highlighted the importance of joint working in effective service delivery.

"You've got to have the veterans' best interest at heart… so, say that they need housing, we are going to approach the housing associations and we would work with them. If they've got substance misuse we work with the organisations that have got that support in place. If they need a clear diagnosis we will refer them to Op Courage or Combat Stress or any of the other partner charities. If it's financial, if it's a big financial need, then we work very closely with SSAFA and we've got a good working relationship…"

(Staff, Stepway)

Stepway is one of the partner organisations in the Midlands for the Veterans' Places, Pathways, and People Programme (VPPPP)[31], funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Trust. The project is run with the participation of numerous ex-service personnel organisations, which are both local as well as national in scale, and is led by one organisation, with other organisations becoming 'members' of the 'portfolio'. VPPP projects are also in operation in Scotland[32] and Wales[33].

Throughout this research, we heard some interesting examples of collaboration and provision by third sector organisations working with ex-service personnel at different stages of their journeys. One example was the charity Hull4Heroes which had begun work on a "transitional veterans' village" to support people as they transition out of the forces,. This has been approved by both Hull City Council and the East Riding of Yorkshire Council[34].

"It did get planning permission [to build veteran-specific housing] during Covid but we were busy, we went from helping five veterans to 500 a week in Covid so, it was just quite a busy time… come out of Covid and we're back on with it now so I'll start building next year."

(Staff, Hull4Heroes)

Most organisations interviewed for this report were ex-service personnel-specific charities which explicitly supported those who had contact with the CJS in addition to supporting the wider ex-service personnel cohort. The non-ex-service personnel-specific charities which were interviewed were: Sacro in Scotland and Nacro in England, both of which had ex-service personnel-specific streams of service. Many third sector organisations engage with ex-service personnel in contact with the justice system following referrals or information from criminal justice partner agencies. This was mentioned in the survey we undertook in Phase 1 of this project where four third sector organisations mentioned that they received referrals from the police; probation and JSW; prisons; mental health services; other charities; and courts.

There were mixed views from ex-service personnel who were interviewed about the care and quality of support they received. Some ex-service personnel spoke highly of the support that they had received post-custody.

"If you are looking for employment, they [Rhondda Veterans Hub] help me with my CV. They've helped me gain a place to live, they've helped me gain funding. Every Christmas I have a hamper off them. They are good. And if I need to fill an application form I go down there and they help me fill an application form out. They are there if you need them, you ring them and they'll help you as much as they can."

(Interview No 70, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Community, Phase 2)

"When I left Leyhill I had support from a lady from SSAFA and she was amazing, really, really good. She was from the Bristol branch and when I moved…I was given the contact details by her for the guy in Wiltshire. I emailed him, he phoned me and we were in contact."

(Interview No 71, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

[31] Source: Defence Medical Welfare Service. Accessed October 2023: https://dmws.org.uk/veterans-places-pathways-people-programme/
[32] Source: Armed Forces Covenant Fund. Accessed October 2023: https://covenantfund.org.uk/vppp-scotland/
[33] Source: Armed Forces Covenant Fund. Accessed October 2023: https://covenantfund.org.uk/vppp-wales/
[34] Source: Veterans Village. Accessed October 2023: https://veteransvillage.org.uk/

"SSAFA's really good because they then put you on to the local – like me, they said, 'We'll put you onto the Maidstone branch and then that person down there will help you; they'll have all your paperwork if you need any help or anything'."

(Interview No 36, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

Other ex-service personnel described feeling disappointed by the support offered, and thus some had concluded that they were 'on their own':

"I've been reaching out to different organisations that help veterans and ex-forces to help me get work. It seems like they talk the talk and I get lots of emails and I get, 'Come to this; come to that'. This has been over a year now and nothing's happened. So, I don't know why they can't find me a job with somebody, to get some experience. It makes me realise that I am on my own a little bit; I am on my own because although I do reach out a little bit every now and again - and this is just my take on it - I realise that I've got to keep my own shit together and I've got to work it through myself."

(Interview No 72, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"[ViCSO] brought me out on the day I was released because he knew I was a bag of nerves… I got my accommodation and that was it. I've heard nothing from any agencies at all, they haven't been in touch with me about anything so, it's quite disappointing."

(Interview No 70, Ex-service personnel, Community, Wales, Phase 2)

In the following sections, the barriers to provision and uptake of support will be discussed in more detail. Here largely institutional barriers to support will be discussed: promotion of services to increase awareness; delayed processes and inconsistencies; challenges of delivering support for people convicted of sexual offences; changing delivery models and processes; funding and staffing constraints; impact of Covid-19; volume of services affecting collaboration; and access to prisons.

Finally, ex-service personnel's behaviour with regard to help-seeking, a theme that has emerged repeatedly in other chapters of this report, will also be highlighted. These barriers emerge mainly due to the functioning of the organisations, the environment they operate in, and the strength of collaboration between different stakeholders in the justice space.

7.1 Institutional barriers to support for ex-service personnel by third sector organisations

7.1.1 Promotion of services

An issue that was discussed in previous chapters and raised by both ex-service personnel and stakeholders was that often ex-service personnel do not know where to go to receive appropriate help. Third sector organisations talked about ways in which they promote awareness of their services, but acknowledged that there were challenges reaching particular groups of ex-service personnel through advertising (for example older people or people with limited literacy), and the associated costs of advertising their services:

"Basically, you can go through your social media outlets but not everybody's on social media. So, we do that on all forms of social media. We try and put things in the local newspaper now and again. All these things cost money don't they so, there's only so [far] you can go… But we could do with posting one out to older people who don't use social media but again where does the money come from?"

(Interview No 16, Third sector, England, Phase 2)

"And they are not quite aware of us yet. We do have to get ourselves out there a little bit more. But like I said, it's usually things like word of mouth with this now."

(Interview No 17, Third sector, England, Phase 2)

"It is about awareness. The sector could do better at getting its message into the right places."

(Survey response, Third sector, Scotland, Phase 1)

Ex-service personnel also talked about the need to increase awareness of services. Some ex-service personnel noted that there was not sufficient information available regarding available support within prisons, and they rely more on word-of-mouth knowledge than visual advertisements.

"I think what's missing is the fact that they are not see-able, there's no advertisement, no point you in this direction. I think there are a couple round about but you don't necessarily know where they are. You maybe hear through the grapevine, 'There's this, this and this', but where are they? There's nothing to pin them down."

(Interview No 73, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"There are all these noticeboards all over the prison with prisoner information. You will see nothing about Sacro on there and to me that's a travesty. These noticeboards should be filled with things like that."

(Interview No 65, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

7.1.2 Processes and bureaucracy causing delays and inconsistencies of support

Delays in receiving support and processes can lead to ex-service personnel feeling unsupported, despite the support being 'on the way'. We were told that processes, such as documentation requirements or the need to liaise with different organisations, could create delays or inconsistencies in support, which could increase the risk of further offending, being recalled, or becoming homeless.

"When I was out, in the eight months, I did get help from the Job Centre. I focused on getting my own help through [Charity 1]. I spoke to my liaison officer with the Job Centre who got me in touch with [Charity 2] and he was getting me a form because they needed me to fill out a form to get my veterans' ID. I couldn't do anything until I got my ID badge, so, I had to wait, but I never got the chance of getting that far because I ended up back in jail."

(Interview No 35, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"The hostel - they kicked me out, I think it was a week, maybe two weeks before I was due to leave and they were supposed to have found me somewhere to live, but they didn't. They were relying on me to do it because I'm ex-forces and I was dealing with [Charity]. But [the Charity] needed me to get specific things that I couldn't get because I hadn't the money to get the things that I needed to get. … And then the hostel was just relying on me and [Charity] to get it done, and they shouldn't have done."

(Interview No 17, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"Like now, I was in private accommodation and usually you get help off [Charity], they'll help you, they'll pay for your bond and your first month's rent, so, set you off. But they [Charity] let me down twice badly, really badly and so I don't bother with them anymore…"

(Interview No 69, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

Some ex-service personnel may not always have documentation that can prove their service history. We were told services that work with ex-service personnel have to verify their service history before they can work with them, usually by contacting relevant branches in the Armed Forces or the MoD office in Glasgow. Some third sector stakeholders who were interviewed for this project discussed delays in verifying service, and how such delays may cause difficulties in securing support on time.

"In order to provide a service to someone you need to verify the service. Sometimes going by a hunch is not enough. However, there have been delays in that through the Army personnel office in Glasgow - six months in one instance, so, you've got someone waiting to be verified for six months."

(Interview No 46, Third sector, Scotland, Phase 2)

"Verification of service with the Army just now, going through APC, can take a long time. I think at one point last year because of Covid delays, as well it was six to nine months that some people were waiting… In extreme crisis cases Veterans UK will sometimes provide - it's basically just an email that says, 'Yes, this person's served', and that can be enough for some of the funders to look at a case. But the majority, particularly Army and regiments will need to see who they served with and for how long because someone could have served with three different regiments… would again impact how they look at that case and how they are able to support that case."

(Interview No 47, Third sector, Scotland, Phase 2)

7.1.3 Challenges working with those convicted of sexual offences

We heard in several interviews about particular challenges in securing support from charities for ex-service personnel convicted of sexual offences.

One organisation spoke of their fear as a young charity that people "might jump on" them for working with people convicted of sexual offences. However, they clarified that they were working to change their policies to re-evaluate how they might work with those convicted of sexual offences in the future, commenting:

"We have got brought into our constitution that we won't work with sex offenders but we are going to work on that and try and get rid of that. It's got to be a case by case basis I think because 'sex offence' covers so much, it's such a broad scale… I think ourselves and the Trustees are going to re-evaluate how we work it and how we word it, to be fair, and work with sex offenders."

(Interview No 16, Third sector, England, Phase 2)

One staff member of a Welsh third sector organisation cited practical difficulties in working with people convicted of sexual offences due to safeguarding concerns for other ex-service personnel and their families in the venues where they conduct interventions.

"For those who have been done for sexual offences and are on the [sex offenders] register, we didn't refuse working with those. However, we did say that it's extremely difficult to bring them into the system that we've got because of the restrictions on their release from prison and where they can congregate and where they can't congregate so, that we did say that, look where we would try and find agencies that could help these guys because we still owe them because they are a veteran, regardless of their offence that they've carried out. We would try and impart a service for them, but it wouldn't be with us because our safeguarding for the veterans and their children that come."

(Interview No 51, Third sector, Wales, Phase 2)

Some ex-service personnel also shared their understanding and experiences of not being able to access certain types of support and having limited options due to the nature of their offending, as well as not mentioning their offence due to perceived attitudes.

"You've got [Organisation 1], you've got [Organisation 2], you've got….all these places. People convicted of sex offences - not eligible for these. So, it is a case of, 'Right, you're an ex-veteran, there's no place we can put you. We'll put you in… with drug users and alcoholics. That's people who turn to drink, ex-military service as well."

(Interview No 16, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

"[Charity] didn't want to know you because of the nature of the offences, they wanted nothing to do with VPs. And so, when you left and you went to go and see them, you didn't talk, you didn't mention your offence or anything like that."

(Interview No 49, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)

However, it is important to note that many stakeholders also stressed that in their experience many charities will work with people convicted of sexual offences:

"No, SSAFA works with anybody. If I refer on to SSAFA, and they are brilliant as well, I send in a risk assessment because obviously they are volunteers and I've been a volunteer. So I send in a risk assessment on the person and the secretary will call me about them anyway. This is all done with the client's consent; I tell them I do have to do that, and they'll work with them."

(Interview No 49, Third sector, Scotland, Phase 2)

"The Royal British Legion will work with them, they don't discriminate against anybody."

(Interview No 15, Third sector, England, Phase 2)

"I think you'll find that's a fake story, fake news [charities refusing to work with those convicted of sexual offences]. I've heard it said about [Charity A]. I took it straight to [Charity A], [and it turned out to be a] load of rubbish."

(Interview No 48, Prison, ViCSO, England, Phase 2)

We also heard that there may be differences in approach at a local level in some organisations:

"Some of the veterans' organisations are very much… they've got their own structure and their own ways of doing things… so they can dictate who and who they don't work with… there's one particular organisation that would be very reluctant to work with [people convicted of sexual offences]… it's more localised… it's just a specific arm and I think that's more about, it's an internal structure thing. People have been there for a long time and kind of set in their ways a bit."

(Interview No 50, Third sector, England, Phase 2)

In such cases it was highlighted, either through stakeholders or the charities themselves, that these charities usually support those convicted of sexual offence convictions. This potentially highlights that while from a policy perspective, charities may be able to work with ex-service personnel with sexual offence convictions, this may not always be reflected in their on-the-ground operations in some locations.

Some of the stakeholders we interviewed reflected that they need to understand potential support options more thoroughly before they can refer ex-service personnel with sexual convictions. This is to avoid a situation wherein someone they refer is not welcomed, or the referral was not appropriate.

"One thing I am keen to do, we've got (area) Veterans' Association so, I'm quite keen to engage with them. However, although they are (area) Veterans Association what I don't want to do is say, 'I've got this VP, this sex offender, he's coming over to you', and then something happens to that, I don't want that on my head. Until I fully understand that their support is there I'm reluctant to reach out because I know how the veterans' branches work, great service, they serve the community… it's very cliquey, like the Army, and what I don't want to do is mention, 'This guy's coming from here."

(Interview No 52, Third sector, England, Phase 2)

We were told that while there is some support available for ex-service personnel convicted of sexual offences across the three nations, there were also challenges. We were not able to ascertain in all of the examples whether this was due to a service not delivering support to ex-service personnel convicted of sexual offences; whether the organisation did commit to delivering support but that this was not communicated across all staff with differences in local approaches; whether stakeholders and/or ex-service personnel were not fully aware of the extent of support some organisations can provide; or some other reason. Whatever the reasons, there was a lack of clarity about what provision is available to this group.

7.1.4 Changing delivery models and processes

In accessing the services of third sector organisations, statutory stakeholders, specifically those based in prisons, as well as ex-service personnel who were interviewed for this project, spoke of a sense of inaccessibility and inflexibility in some of the charities working in the field, with charities either withdrawing from prisons for multiple reasons including Covid-19 and staffing constraints. For some who were interviewed, some charities were seen to have bureaucratic referral pathways and to be reducing their service.

"…We're having difficulties with [charity] at the moment, they are the blank cheque of charities… Their processes are becoming a lot more difficult… and the fact that they are pulling out of the interventions inside the justice systems at the moment, which is ludicrous."

(Interview No 28, Prison, ViCSO, Wales, Phase 2)

The developments noted above may be reflective of the post-Covid landscape, as some stakeholders reported that third sector organisations have become more reliant on online mechanisms and have reduced face-to-face contact, which may not be suitable for ex-service personnel in the CJS, particularly those in prison.

"I think my biggest disadvantage with the charities at the minute is probably a UK problem, they are all trying to adjust to more online. Your national referral processes were taking away this one to one communication and, 'If you need this then send it off to a case worker maybe in the Midlands'…When in this environment, it doesn't work, (1) because they don't have a computer; and (2) because you need to come in and see the guys face-to-face, you need to build those relationships."

(Interview No 28, Prison, ViCSO, Wales, Phase 2)

"The only issue with nationals [charities] is they don't do a lot of face-to-face. Sometimes it may just be a phone call or a Zoom call which, from my experience, the individuals that need support and help may not be available to engage in Zoom calls, Teams meetings, that sort of stuff because their erratic lifestyle takes them away from that aspect."

(Interview No 2, Police, Scotland, Phase 2)

"Everything is done on the Internet that they can't look into, they can't read the information about it and then make a decision."

(Interview No 20, Prison, ViCSO, England, Phase 2)

7.1.5 Funding and staffing constraints

A finding from phase one was the prevalence of charities delivering services to ex-service personnel, potentially making the landscape "crowded". This was explored in greater detail in section 6.4.1, where we described how statutory stakeholders were not always aware of appropriate services to which to refer ex-service personnel.

However, the Directory of Social Change in 2019 noted that funding was highlighted as a key challenge for charities that worked with ex-service personnel in the justice system across the three nations, particularly for those providing in-prison services. In phase two of this research, funding constraints were also highlighted, particularly in Scotland, where we were told of examples of restricted and shorter-term funding periods:

"Officially we are a national service but the next batch of money has restricted us to Edinburgh and the Lothians. So, what happens on 31st March next year when this money for my post runs out?"

(Interview No 53, Third sector, Scotland, Phase 2)

"Up until now, like I said, our service was funded for five years, it was quite secure and you knew it was there. But now it's going to, probably like everywhere else, might be on a yearly basis. And services could come and go, and that has happened. That's a weakness which is universal, not just to the veterans."

(Interview No 46, Third sector, Scotland, Phase 2)

"I can remember in the old days if a prisoner's wife was struggling to get to see him, Sacro used to run a bus from Glasgow and it would stop in Edinburgh and drive up to Peterhead or wherever. They helped them with social security to get fares for visits. You never even hear of that now. Whether that even still exists I don't know because you never hear about it".

(Interview No 65, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

During the course of our research, stakeholders advised of the pressures on volunteer staff and case workers, and that recruiting for vacant posts had been a challenge. This is highlighted further in the following section

7.1.6 Impact of Covid-19

As discussed in Chapter 5, Covid-19 was raised by third sector stakeholders as having a significant impact on their ability to identify and support ex-service personnel. In some cases, support was halted altogether.

"Of course [in-prison support], it died a death during the pandemic and now we are going to re-start it again, re-write the course and get it back up again."

(Interview No 55, Third sector, Scotland, Phase 2)

Covid-19 also had implications in terms of recruitment of volunteers, as some third sector organisations experienced difficulties in retaining volunteers on the ground, as well as retention of and recruitment of staff. Others talked about how they were able to adapt their approach and pivot their activities to keep support going during the pandemic.

"No, Covid hit and it all went a bit 'Pete Tong'. But, this is why we found fortunately the outdoor community project, so, we could still meet our veterans in an outdoor environment."

(Interview No 44, Third sector, England, Phase 2)

"The only one [challenge] is resources, we could do with more case workers. SSAFA, like other charities, are finding it really difficult to recruit new case workers. I think we've lost about a third of our case workers in the last three years because of the pandemic, they've just given up doing it and it's very difficult to find replacements."

(Interview No 54, Third sector, England, Phase 2)

7.1.7 Volume of services impacting collaboration

While it was established at the outset of this chapter that ex-service personnel-specific charities frequently collaborate, the literature has found that this level of collaboration was not observed across different sectors in England, Scotland, and Wales (Robson, *et al.*, 2019). During the course of our research respondents highlighted the importance of collaborating with other organisations, however, it appears that the pool of organisations that our respondents partnered with was relatively small. This has implications for the nature of referrals ex-service personnel receive, as charity caseworkers potentially become gatekeepers of onward referrals, only referring ex-service personnel to organisations with whom they have already built a relationship.

"To my knowledge there are 300 veterans' charities in the UK; I can't deal with all of them. In the last couple of years when I've done this role I've managed to build up a direct contact with a few agencies, four or five, that are my go-to contacts..."

(Interview No 56, Third sector, Scotland, Phase 2)

"There weren't many organisations that I particularly knew of, although they've always been out there but for me it's a trust thing. If I don't know then I'm not going to recommend you because (a) you are not going to be helpful to the veteran community; and (b), more importantly to me, it's my professional reputation on the line and that's important to me."

(Interview No 43, Third sector, Wales, Phase 2)

In England and Wales, some stakeholders suggested inconsistencies as a result of the number of charities delivering in this space with suggestions including one single agency for ex-service personnel and sustained income.

"The gap is rather than having…a plethora of third sector agencies, (there should be) one massive agency throughout England, Scotland and Wales to provide support for veterans, which is constantly funded like substance misuse…within Wales every local authority are given continual funding for substance misuse, I mean, couldn't the government give continual funding for veterans of one agency?… so, there seems to be great for two years and then a massive void with nothing and that that's the gap."

(Interview No 51, Third sector, Wales, Phase 2)

"There's no consistency; I think that's the issue, there isn't a consistent pathway. The Americans do it with a VC, they don't have SSAFA, British Legion, Woody's Lodge, all these, they have just the VC. You go there and, if you want housing or rent paid or all this you go to one place. It's a hell of a lot easier. The problem we have is a lot of - how many charities have we got? It's over 1,000 charities, they don't do it all, do they?"

(Interview No 28, Prison, ViCSO, Wales, Phase 2)

One stakeholder working in the Scottish Prison Service also emphasised the challenge of the volume of charities, with a suggestion of a single contact point.

"There are too many charities involved, a single contact point would be preferable".

(Survey response, Prison, Scotland, Phase 1)

Probation staff informed us of a similar challenge in Wales, wherein they mentioned that while there is a more coordinated effort to train probation practitioners across different PDUs to increase awareness of services (as was highlighted in Chapter 6, section 6.1), it can be difficult to know all the details of each service and to establish if different organisations extend their services to different regions in the nation.

"I think where we do struggle… because of the geography issue is that there are so many different organisations, charities and partners in each individual area that keeping up with every single one of them and knowing what they all do and how to contact them all can get quite difficult because there is such a large volume… we are not accessing certain charities in Wrexham [in Wales], for example, because they don't technically exist in Wrexham, they actually exist in Chester [in England]. So that, you know, that's a difficulty just because we have such a wide geographical area… I'm not convinced it's something I can ever stay on top of just because there's such a changing environment all the time in every business… So it's that, you know, that's a difficulty for everyone, really, practitioners included because again you know they might say they're a North Wales based charity and that is true, but they're North Wales on the Wrexham side, they're not on the Caernarfon side".

(Interview No 12, Probation, Wales, Phase 2)

7.1.8 Access to prisons

Difficulties experienced by services accessing prisons were highlighted in Chapter 5, we were told that due to security issues and the bureaucratic nature of prison environments, it can be challenging to bring in staff from third sector organisations. Whilst this does not present as an institutional barrier within third sector organisations, it is worth noting the challenges they face from their perspective. Some stakeholders who were interviewed talked about efforts to make links with prisons or to re-invigorate links with prisons after Covid-19.

"We went to a meeting years ago and somebody from one of the prisons turned up and did a presentation. They actually produced figures of veteran offenders, and you were talking a couple of hundred people within the prison system who were veterans, and we tried to link in with them. We got told we could go to a team meeting and do a presentation. We were trying to get a foot in the door, in particular with the prisons in the area because there are quite a few."

(Interview No 52, Third sector, England, Phase 2)

"For the last three years sadly it's been grim, we've basically had no contact at all with prisons but now we're slowly getting back together. We had a meeting with this ViCSO, two weeks ago, we are going to start getting back into there again."

(Interview No 55, Third sector, Scotland, Phase 2)

One organisation described their experience trying to provide interventions in a prison environment, indicating how much time goes into providing in-prison interventions.

"…because of the movements you've got to be in by a certain time and if you miss it by five minutes you are standing in the foyer for about an hour before you can actually get access. And you've got a 15 minute gap to get out of the prison and if you don't get out of the prison in time you are sat in the canteen for an hour and a half until movements are over, then you can move yourself. It just takes the whole day up when you are doing a course for two hours."

(Interview No 44, Third sector, England, Phase 2)

The difficulty in accessing prisons can lead to a limited support landscape within the prison, as observed in Chapter 5.

7.2 Individual barriers to support: Reluctance to seek help

As has been observed throughout this report, the stakeholders and ex-service personnel who were interviewed spoke about ex-service personnel's reluctance to seek help as a distinct barrier to accessing support. This was also raised by third sector interviewees and in particular the belief that ex-service personnel can find it difficult to reach out for help as they are trained to be self-sufficient.

"I think they could put up the barriers more than anything. I think them asking for help is probably the barrier, if anything, being too proud to ask for support is a big barrier where veterans are concerned. Well, where anybody is concerned but especially where veterans are concerned, they don't feel they deserve or should ask for help."

(Interview No 16, Third sector, England, Phase 2)

"Veterans in general find it very difficult to ask for help because they've been trained to be self-sufficient and they've been trained that asking for help is a sign of weakness. You need to be able to sort this out yourself… the older ones, I'd say anybody over 34 onwards are quite reluctant in asking for help. So, we don't use the word 'help', we use 'support', even in our tag line."

(Interview No 44, Third sector, England, Phase 2)

Ex-service personnel also spoke about their experiences of this, highlighting that they believed they should only rely on themselves, with one explaining that he was only inclined to seek help once he was "at the bottom".

"No because I don't think I deserve it, I think it's funding for other people. I've had loads of people who have said to me, 'You deserve it, you've served', but it doesn't sit well with me. I've put myself in this situation, I'll get myself out of it."

(Interview No 74, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"I don't know about the other guys but speaking for myself, being ex-military you are trained to stand on your two feet anyway and rely on yourself, not actively seek support until you are literally at the bottom where you can't go any further, when you think 'Maybe I should'."

(Interview No 6, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

7.3 Summary

Our research underlines the important role that third sector organisations play in ensuring adequate and holistic support for ex-service personnel in the justice system. However, this landscape seems to be complex, and not well understood by ex-service personnel or wider stakeholders, many of whom had little awareness of the range of services available or their eligibility. Furthermore, there is distinct variance in the perceptions of these services, and for those convicted of sexual offences there appears to be a lack of clarity on what is available and associated barriers to accessing these services. It is clear that Covid-19 had a significant impact on third sector organisations in this space particularly those who previously worked in prisons. While joint working and collaboration was highlighted by many stakeholders, collaboration also seemed to be restricted to a few charities, often due to lack of awareness of or relationships with other organisations.

Ex-service personnel's reluctance to seek help was a prominent individual barrier to take-up of support from third sector organisations, as was observed for other stakeholders and in other stages of the justice system and has been a cross-cutting theme throughout this report. In Chapter 9, recommendations will be made to mitigate some of the challenges observed in the third sector.

8

Support for families

8. Support for families

Challenges experienced by ex-service personnel in transitioning from the Armed Forces to the community are mirrored for their families, with some experiencing radical changes upon leaving the Armed Forces environment (Ahern, et al., 2015). Support and guidance on transitioning to civilian life create challenges for families, resulting in the need for support (Fulton, et al., 2019).

The stakeholders and ex-service personnel interviewed acknowledged the need for support for families of ex-service personnel in contact with the CJS.

"... the governor, she said that was one of her priorities, not just to think about the veteran in custody but the veteran's family outside. I'm looking at [the Organisation], [the Organisation] are probably the main ones for families outside, so, hopefully when I speak to [the organisation] I'll see where the relationship is there."

(Interview No 57, Prison, England, Phase 2)

"There should be a lot more support for families of people that have been incarcerated. When you are given a sentence, you are not just given a sentence, it's my little boy that's been given a sentence, it's my fiancé, it's my Mum, it's my elderly gran who's got dementia."

(Interview No 75, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

Previous research found that the needs of families are intertwined with the needs of ex-service personnel on leaving the military, with housing and relocation a prominent issue (Ahern, *et al.*, 2015).

"... I think we need to help families, especially - I think the Army is a prime example. If you have just done so, many years in the Army and you've finished, that's you, get on with your life. I don't even think you actually get a house because you move out of your army house, or you move out of your Army flat, and you have to go and rent a house or buy a house and I think it's something we need to have."

(Interview No 76, Ex-service personnel, Scotland, Phase 2)

"And it's not always the military person that can't transition into civilian life, it's their partners, it's their kids, it's the wives, husbands...because you are in this community, you are protected behind a wire, you are in this community... And then you are left to go and move down the street where you don't know anybody, you can't pop in for a cup of tea and it's really isolating for people."

(Interview No 6, Police, England, Phase 2)

Within this context the research team aimed to recruit families for interview at each of the eight separate research sites, aiming for a cross-section of familial relationships. Unfortunately, there were few family members identified, with those identified reluctant to participate in the research. One of the key barriers in recruiting families was the high incidence of relationship breakdown by the time ex-service personnel came in contact with the justice system. The ex-service personnel we spoke to were very rarely supported by or in contact with their families, which made it challenging for the research team to find families to interview. Although many voluntary organisations were willing to help to try to recruit families for the research it was difficult for them to facilitate interviews. One family member in Wales did participate in an interview in the community, with their partner.

Furthermore, the research team tried to increase participation by creating an online survey and promoting this through an online campaign advertising the opportunity to families. Despite a variety of efforts to recruit families, our attempts were unsuccessful with only one family member completing the survey.

It is worth noting that few of the ex-service personnel we interviewed had sought support for their family. In the interviews conducted where family support was discussed only 10% (9) had sought support for a family member or a family member had received support.

In the absence of direct consultation with family members, we have considered the potential barriers to identification and support for families through the perceptions and experiences of key stakeholders and ex-service personnel. This chapter will first discuss the existing provision of support for families, and then examine the barriers to support.

8.1 Provision of support for families of ex-service personnel in the CJS

Stakeholders and ex-service personnel discussed the existing provision of support for families in the community. We heard that the type of support varied and included but was not limited to emotional support, financial support, employability support and housing. Where this support was highlighted in interviews with ex-service personnel, they spoke of support being accessed during the period when going through the courts and by a partner whilst they were in prison.

"As well as veterans or serving personnel, we'll provide support to their partners, spouses, widows, even ex-partners as well and to dependants under the age of 18. In general, there's a lot of support available to families of veterans or serving personnel. There are so many organisations who offer such varied support and most of them offer support to families as well in some shape or form."

(Interview No 58, Third sector, Scotland, Phase 2)

"At the moment we're using [Organisation] because the missus, I put the missus in contact with [Organisation] while I was inside, so, we're using it now, but it's taken 15 years after I left to be able to do that. It wasn't until I put the forms in for the family support after one of the meetings … The missus did, she accessed [the Organisation], they've been in contact frequently and the charity that the missus is working with, they phone her frequently as well to find out how things are going, how she's coping, how she's dealing with things and all the rest of it."

(Interview No 73, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

"When we were going through all the courts my wife did deal with [Organisation] quite a lot, they helped. The wife and children were still living on what they call married quarters, they lived on the camp with me. Obviously because I got found guilty and sent to prison, the house that I had with my job they were no longer entitled to so, [Organisation] helped them out quite a lot with getting them a council house fairly quickly. My wife had never dealt with benefits or anything before, so I helped her get all that stuff sorted."

(Interview No 45, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

Ex-service personnel also mentioned that organisations often liaised with families regarding the individual's release from prison, allowing families to support them with their rehabilitation. One ex-service personnel mentioned that involving families in this manner serves as a reminder for them to contact organisations on release from prison.

"[the Organisation] contacted my parents quite a lot, they were pretty good… The agencies that come in to speak to you, get to speak to you while you are inside and get involved with the families to say, 'When he gets out, he can get this, this is where the funding is, we'll fund that; this is the mental health he can get when he gets out, he needs to get this'. When you leave prison, your head is just a cloud of fog, you are just happy to be out. So, if your families are involved, they go, 'Hang on a minute now, I've been told by so-and-so agency you need to get this sorted, you need to get that sorted."

(Interview No 1, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)

Support for families may not directly be delivered by the organisations supporting the ex-service personnel, leading to onward referrals.

"So, with the family side, that would get referred into [the Organisation]. It's not completely beyond the realms of the scope, we currently only support the veteran as an individual. So if there's an issue with the family then we will re-route them to [the Organisation] So, the family side will be dealt with by [the Organisation]. The individual through the criminal justice system will be dealt with by us."

(Interview No 53, Third sector, Scotland, Phase 2)

"Now, for the wider family we don't get that involved with the extended family. We do get an opportunity to meet them and speak to them but for [our Organisation] our main focus is on the ex-military personnel. By helping them, hopefully we are helping the wider family. Say, for example, if an ex-military personnel, one of their children was having issues at school, it doesn't mean we ignore that, we can point them in the right direction to get support with various things."

(Interview No 46, Third sector, Scotland, Phase 2)

Both direct support provision and referrals often hinge upon ex-service personnel putting their family members in touch with the relevant organisations. As many ex-service personnel experience a breakdown in familial relationships by the time they have contact with the CJS, significant barriers emerge in offering support to such families.

8.2 Barriers to support for families

8.2.1 Pride

From the interviews we conducted with stakeholders and ex-service personnel, we were advised that the barriers to family accessing support are diverse, mirroring the barriers to accessing services for ex-service personnel. Two stakeholders noted that a barrier to support for families included pride.

"Don't want to ask, maybe. Pride or could be too afraid to ask in case they think that they are looking like they are failing as a parent or as a family unit. …And helping them manage the fact that that is going to happen in your family unit and it's okay, but how to manage that. Yes, I think support for them integrating back into the family unit, not bringing their military mind into the family unit because it's not a military family."

(Interview No 43, Third sector, Wales, Phase 2)

8.2.2 Ex-service personnel as conduits to families

Some organisations shared that they relied on ex-service personnel themselves to let them know if family members require assistance and act as a conduit, passing on information to family members and asking them to get in touch. This meant that the organisations didn't have automatic contact with family members this could be a barrier, especially where relationships have broken down.

> ***"A partner or spouse is eligible for funding support, for employability support, for independent living support… unless that family comes to us, just now we're very limited in what we can do because if we're engaging with their partner it relies on them - they'll maybe have that conversation, 'Is there anybody at home that additionally needs help?' But the relaying of the communication needs to come from them. I think it's definitely a barrier to support but I think equally there's just that general barrier that people won't necessarily think that they're eligible for support…"***

(Interview No 47, Third sector, Scotland, Phase 2)

8.2.3 Eligibility and lack of awareness of entitlement to support

Another prominent barrier to emerge was that families may not be aware of the fact that they are eligible to receive support. This is likely exacerbated in cases where families have broken down and referral into support is dependent on the ex-service personnel themselves passing on information.

> ***"I think a lot of it is the identification of them, that is always the key. Even if a single mother or single dad, they could be the past partner of somebody who's served, and they are entitled to exactly the same family support as somebody who is serving or a veteran who is still married. They are still entitled to all of their support, but they may not know it."***

(Interview No 58, Government, England, Phase 2)

It may not be clear to the ex-service personnel or their families as to who is entitled to support.

> ***"My girlfriend is struggling financially because she hasn't got me there … she's only my girlfriend so I don't think they would class her as being entitled to any help or support. My ex-wife, she's had all sorts of help, even though we've been separated for a long time."***

(Interview No 12, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

8.2.4 Dissatisfaction with inconsistent support

It was perceived by some of the ex-service personnel interviewed, that their families did not always have positive experiences which can create further challenges and/or barriers to support. These included slowness of response and difficulties navigating processes.

> ***"She has, she's reached out to [Organisation]. She's reached out to [Organisation] mainly to do with me because we are not married; her contact with [them] was mainly to do with me. And although she's had a good response from [Organisation], [they are] very slow, very slow responding … A little bit disappointed…"***

(Interview No 9, Ex-service personnel, England, Phase 2)

8.2.5 Changing family dynamics impacting on availability of support

Families of service personnel experience frequent separations, regular relocations and detachment from mainstream civilian life which can put pressure on family relationships (Hall, 2011) and can result in divorce and separation. Support for families by various statutory as well as voluntary organisations may cease in situations where the family dynamic changes (for example, divorce or separation).

> ***"I think it could be improved. One of the things that I've picked up personally is if somebody is divorced or separated, estranged, they suddenly lose that veteran connection, which seems unfair, especially when they've got family as well. The partner loses that connection. So, it could be somebody who's spent 20 years following somebody round the country and they get separated or divorced, suddenly they are not included. We can't help them after that so there is a need there."***

(Interview No 60, Local government, England, Phase 2)

One third sector stakeholder highlighted that in cases where family relationships had broken down, requests for supporting or involving families may be a mechanism for the ex-service personnel to maintain contact with, or return to, the family. This was also cited as a potential barrier for us to recruit family members by stakeholders across various organisations, when we were trying to identify family members to interview for this project.

> ***"And some of the clients, they have been disowned by their families, so, there's that aspect as well. You've got to be very careful about whether you are going to involve the family or not because they might not want to be contacted. They might say the prisoner might be using you as a route to get back in touch with his family and the family have said, 'We do not want to know this person', that happens."***
>
> *(Interview No 54, Third sector, England, Phase 2)*

This makes it challenging for organisations to identify and offer support to families, as after the break-down of relationships the support landscape may shrink for them.

8.2.6 Practical barriers and proving service history

A final barrier to support that was expressed to us were practical barriers including the challenges of providing proof of service and identity.

> ***"Tried for the [the Organisation] thing for the carpets, for my family, but [they] aren't able to help until I get my red book from Glasgow, which is a nightmare because I'm in prison. I need to send a copy of my driving licence off with it as proof of who I am."***
>
> *(Interview No 76, Ex-service personnel, Wales, Phase 2)*

8.3 Summary

A limitation of this report, as noted at the outset of this chapter, was the lack of engagement from families of ex-service personnel who had contact with the CJS. This gap was partially met by engaging participants on their views regarding the landscape of support for families. While this is an area where further research would be beneficial, the early findings from this report suggest that there should be a focus on creating awareness of entitlement to and availability of support amongst family members of ex-service personnel, with clarity on who is eligible for family support. This should also consider whether there are gaps in entitlement which should be addressed. We observed that family breakdowns are not uncommon, and providing support in such circumstances becomes all the more challenging.

9

Conclusions and recommendations

9. Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter details the key findings and recommendations based on the analysis of evidence collected in this project.

The recommendations each confirm the key agencies and/or stages of the justice process to which the recommendations are applicable - police, probation/JSW, prison, third sector, courts, MoD, Governments of England, Scotland and Wales. We believe that action on these recommendations can lead to meaningful change in addressing the barriers identified in this report.

The focus of this project was to (1) review the current processes and mechanisms in place for identifying ex-service personnel within the CJS of England, Wales and Scotland, identify any shortcomings, and make practical recommendations on how identification could be improved, and (2) to examine the barriers to uptake of support for both ex-service personnel in the CJS and their families, and make appropriate recommendations.

The research team faced some limitations during the course of this project, primarily that the team received limited participation from family members of ex-service personnel in the CJS.

Nevertheless, the project provides a large evidence base to inform how we can improve identification of ex-service personnel in the CJS and take up of support. We believe the following recommendations can help produce impactful outcomes for ex-service personnel in the CJS and support the drive to reduce reoffending.

9.1: Recommendations to improve identification of ex-service personnel who come into contact with the CJS

Recommendation 1

Throughout this report, we found that where the question is asked if someone has previously served in the Armed Forces, it is often the case that little or no information is provided as to why the question is being asked and what will happen as a result of disclosure. This was a clear barrier to ex-service personnel identifying themselves at that point. Particular issues to be noted include the mistrust of the police many of the participants expressed as well as concern for how ex-service personnel status would be used or featured within court proceedings. In prisons, it is important that ex-service personnel status is recorded at every stage, and not just during the initial custody process. Ex-service personnel may choose to disclose their service status to peer support mentors or healthcare staff, and this information must be recorded so as to improve understanding of when and under which circumstances ex-service personnel feel comfortable or encouraged to identify themselves.

Ensure rationale for asking about ex-service personnel status is communicated when question is asked.

- **Police**
- **Probation/JSW**
- **Prison**
- Third Sector
- **Courts**
- MoD
- Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales

Recommendation 2

Although there are opportunities to identify ex-service personnel during interactions in the community, the first formal point of identification following contact with criminal justice agencies is at the point of arrest. It is suggested that, for many, this was too late to meaningfully prevent individuals from entering the criminal justice system. Indeed, it was suggested there is scope and significant value in establishing early intervention strategies for ex-service personnel in the community by leveraging a multi-agency approach involving police, local authorities, and third sector organisations.

Expand the identification mechanisms in policing beyond police custody: this includes increasing staff awareness regarding ex-service personnel, and the signs to look out for whilst in the community. This would allow police offers to have more opportunities to refer ex-service personnel into appropriate services.

- **Police**
- Probation/JSW
- Prison
- Third Sector
- Courts
- MoD
- Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales

Recommendation 3

For individuals whose offence would lead to court proceedings, there were mixed reports about whether individuals would be routinely asked about ex-service personnel status, how the question would be asked and if/how this would be communicated within pre-sentence reports to other probation practitioners. Moreover, it was highlighted that, in Scotland, there is no formal provision in the JSW report or during their induction process to ask about ex-service personnel status.

Justice social work (JSW) should embed the question, "Have you served in the Armed Forces or reserves for a day or more" in their list of questions asked during induction and writing JSW reports. Both justice social work and probation should consistently ask the question and record and share this information appropriately.

- Police
- Probation/JSW
- Prison
- Third Sector
- **Courts**
- MoD
- Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales

Recommendation 4

Moreover, there was evidence to suggest that ex-service personnel's decision to reveal their service history was often influenced by their legal representatives, with some ex-service personnel choosing to not identify themselves during court proceedings. This could impact identification during the pre-sentence report and JSW report stages. Further inquiry is required into the perceptions of ex-service personnel by the judiciary, as many of those interviewed believe that the judiciary would impose harsher sentences on ex-service personnel due to their background, whilst some believed that the judiciary would look at them in a more positive light.

Further research into the perceptions of ex-service personnel amongst the judiciary and legal professionals is recommended.

- Police
- Probation/JSW
- Prison
- Third Sector
- **Courts**
- MoD
- Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales

Recommendation 5

Across the CJS, there are several different agencies where individuals are or could be identified as ex-service personnel, many of which record information on a siloed IT system. This can lead to information not being passed to other staff members working with the individual. Having a more joined-up system between the police, probation/JSW, and prison would ensure fewer ex-service personnel slip through identification mechanisms.

Consider if/how identification status could be shared between different IT systems and therefore shared more easily between different agencies working within the CJS.

- **Police**
- **Probation/JSW**
- **Prison**
- Third Sector
- Courts
- **MoD**
- **Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales**

Recommendation 6

A final recommendation that applies to all statutory and third sector bodies who work with this cohort is the use of language when asking about service status. We heard through this research that ex-service personnel did not always realise their service history qualified them for identification or support, for example, due to shorter service or not having been in active combat. Standardising a question which uses clear language to explicitly set out who qualifies would benefit identification, as would making concerted efforts to emphasise military experience over combat experience when using the term, 'veteran'.

Standardise the identification question to clearly convey broad eligibility and the meaning of 'ex-service personnel' and/or 'veteran'. Ex-service personnel organisations can help promote the expanded, inclusive meaning of the term 'veteran'.

- **Police**
- **Probation/JSW**
- **Prison**
- **Third Sector**
- **Courts**
- **MoD**
- **Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales**

Recommendation 7

Throughout the course of this research, it has been clear that while it is important to ask about service status in initial meetings, due to the particular environments of this engagement, ex-service personnel may not always feel comfortable identifying. Therefore, having multiple opportunities to share service status is important. This already happens in prisons, but further focus on other stages of the CJS would be beneficial.

Build multiple opportunities for ex-service personnel to share their service status into each part of the criminal justice pathway.

- **Police**
- **Probation/JSW**
- **Prison**
- **Third Sector**
- **Courts**
- MoD
- Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales

9.2: Recommendations to address or mitigate barriers to support experienced by ex-service personnel in the CJS and their families

Recommendation 8

Upon identification at different earlier stages of the justice process after police contact, it was unclear what referral mechanisms there were as well as how referral opportunities would be communicated to ex-service personnel. Ensuring there are established and automated referral mechanisms with reliable services who will support ex-service personnel is important after someone has identified.

Establish automated processes of referral following identification in police custody.

- **Police**
- Probation/JSW
- Prison
- **Third Sector**
- Courts
- MoD
- Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales

Recommendation 9

During the course of this research, ex-service personnel spoke of limited support available to them before coming in contact with the justice system, with many stating that being involved in the CJS was the first time they were made aware of support pathways. Our research showed that in addition to ex-service personnel not always knowing that they were entitled to and eligible for support, it was challenging for them to ask for help. The evidence indicates that a formal engagement strategy immediately following transition to the community could be beneficial in terms of staying in touch with ex-service personnel to both signpost support where early signals of need are identified as well as represent opportunities to continue to engage with the military community. As some ex-service personnel may experience challenges later into their transition, a consistent engagement strategy may help them feel connected to the Armed Forces. Whilst we recognise that the ex-service personnel and stakeholders we interviewed spoke extensively of ex-service personnel's own reluctance to ask for help, improving engagement with ex-service personnel after transition may address some of the factors influencing their decision not to seek help.

Develop engagement strategies to maintain contact with ex-service personnel who may be at risk of offending or require additional support following transition from the Armed Forces into community.

- Police
- Probation/JSW
- Prison
- Third Sector
- Courts
- MoD
- Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales

Recommendation 10

For many ex-service personnel, there was limited awareness concerning services and support specifically for the ex-service personnel community. Where there was awareness, there were often uncertainties concerning their eligibility to access support. This is especially the case for families of ex-service personnel. Feelings of inauthenticity at accessing support badged as 'veteran-specific' was a significant barrier for some ex-service personnel who had served for a short period, not completed basic training or did not have combat experience.

Improve communications to ex-service personnel and their families regarding eligibility to access support, including development of specialist marketing materials and advertising campaigns.

- Police
- Probation/JSW
- Prison
- Third Sector
- Courts
- MoD
- Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales

Recommendation 11

One of the needs that was identified through engagement with ex-service personnel around their wellbeing was to widen the professional understanding of their mental health needs beyond PTSD and ensure appropriate support. Supporting individuals with PTSD is essential and this work was well-recognised and valued. PTSD was dominant within discussions concerning mental health, which may neglect other important areas such as anxiety, depression etc. Many of the ex-service personnel we interviewed came into the CJS before the launch of Op NOVA and Op COURAGE which we believe should support this need. We would therefore recommend such collaborative services be extended to those currently in the CJS, especially those in prison, where waitlists to see mental health practitioners were reported to be too long. We would also like to see such collaborative 'veteran-informed' pathways of mental health support for those in the CJS developed and extended to Scotland and Wales.

Develop varied 'veteran-informed' provisions of mental health support pathways that address a range of needs. In Wales and Scotland this could be achieved by developing joined-up pathways similar to Op NOVA and Op COURAGE.

- Police
- **Probation/JSW**
- **Prison**
- **Third Sector**
- Courts
- **MoD**
- Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales

Recommendation 12

It was also highlighted by staff working across the CJS that awareness regarding particular issues that ex-service personnel may experience is limited. It would therefore be beneficial for all staff in these organisations to receive training to become more 'veteran-informed'.

Provide 'veteran-informed' training to all staff who work with ex-service personnel: including awareness of who is eligible to access support; indicators that can help identify ex-service personnel; the additional support needs they may have, and the additional support options available for them.

- **Police**
- **Probation/JSW**
- **Prison**
- **Third Sector**
- **Courts**
- MoD
- Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales

Recommendation 13

› We heard from ex-service personnel and from professionals that experience in the Armed Forces amongst police, prison and probation staff could be positive for engagement. This implies that ex-service personnel may feel more comfortable identifying themselves to people who have had a shared experience of serving in the Armed Forces.

Continue work already underway to ensure representation of ex-service personnel in the different parts of the justice system, by assigning Armed Forces champions/SPOCs.

- **Police**
- **Probation/JSW**
- **Prison**
- Third Sector
- **Courts**
- MoD
- Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales

Recommendation 14

The ViCSO role was identified as central within the prison, supporting a range of activities and support for ex-service personnel. All ViCSOs that engaged in this project were passionate about the role. As has been highlighted in Chapter 5, ViCSOs have provided a standard of care which was appreciated by ex-service personnel across all the sites we visited. Many of the ex-service personnel we interviewed spoke of the importance of ViCSOs in providing support to them, and how their engagement with support would improve if ViCSOs had more time and dedicated resources to support them in prisons where the role was conducted voluntarily in addition to full-time duties. There was a notable difference in resource available and time given to the role, which has led to significant differences between prisons in terms of availability of support. The ViCSO would benefit from being ring-fenced, to ensure that individuals in these roles have the capacity to support ex-service personnel. Where necessary, third sector organisations can provide ViCSO-related services in prisons.

Expand and ringfence resources available for the ViCSO role. Make ViCSO a full-time, paid position in prisons, particularly those with significant numbers of identified ex-service personnel.

- Police
- Probation/JSW
- **Prison**
- **Third Sector**
- Courts
- MoD
- **Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales**

Recommendation 15

The accounts of stakeholders in this study have revealed a landscape of support that is in a constant state of flux, which makes it difficult to know what the best services are to support different needs. Whilst recognising the drivers of commissioning processes are far wider than those relating to ex-service personnel, it would be beneficial to have longer-term funding arrangements for key services to stabilise the provision of support within each local area.

Establish longer-term commissioning of services to improve continuity of service provision.

- Police
- **Probation/JSW**
- **Prison**
- Third Sector
- Courts
- MoD
- **Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales**

Recommendation 16

The fieldwork in this study was impacted by the ongoing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, with prisons still recovering from this period. What was clear from the findings of this study is delivery in prisons from a range of services ceased during the pandemic and had not yet fully resumed. This impacted the provision of direct support available to ex-service personnel as well as the resources available to ViCSOs. Additionally, a move to more online/remote support both excludes those who are not able to access online support and creates barriers for others who expressed discomfort with these options as opposed to face-to-face. The reduction of services in prisons was interpreted by some ex-service personnel as them being forgotten and devalued. For some, when this is combined with experiences of failed referrals following identification, it can create entrenched, suspicious, and hostile views towards services that aim to support them.

Increase face-to-face engagement with and services for ex-service personnel in prison to break down barriers and develop trust.

- Police
- Probation/JSW
- **Prison**
- **Third Sector**
- Courts
- MoD
- Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales

Recommendation 17

It was recognised that there are many touchpoints when ex-service personnel may come into contact with the CJS, starting from policing through to post-prison. Having written or visual materials available at these touchpoints would increase awareness of key services and support available to ex-service personnel and their families. The materials can also serve as a quick refresher about ex-service personnel coming in contact with these services for staff (police, prison etc) who can utilise these materials as well.

Develop accessible visual/written materials available at touchpoints across the CJS.

- **Police**
- **Probation/JSW**
- **Prison**
- **Third Sector**
- **Courts**
- MoD
- Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales

Recommendation 18

For individuals reaching the end of prison sentences, we were told of differences in the strengths of post-custody pathways for ex-service personnel. Furthermore, there was not an established expectation that face-to-face contact with key workers from services should be available for ex-service personnel. Developing 'veteran-informed' pathways that detail specific services and named points of contact as well as planned face-to-face first meetings would create structure for ex-service personnel upon release from prison.

Support for ex-service personnel as they are released from prison should account for their service history, mental health needs, disabilities, and offending history.

- Police
- **Probation/JSW**
- **Prison**
- **Third Sector**
- Courts
- MoD
- Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales

Recommendation 19

Another finding from the research was the lack of awareness of appropriate services available for ex-service personnel. This finding has cut across all stages of the CJS and, therefore, it would be beneficial for all stakeholders working in this space to have access to a database of support services who work with ex-service personnel in the CJS, as well as organisations who extend their services to those convicted of sexual and violent offences. This would include third sector organisations and statutory services. Such a database would also be beneficial for maintaining appropriate localised structures for multi-agency working/ communication so that information is shared on a timely basis about changes in the local landscape of provision.

Develop a database for stakeholders with information about third sector and other organisations that provide services to ex-service personnel in the justice system. The database should be secure so that organisations can detail if they work with those convicted of sexual and other violent offences.

- Police
- Probation/JSW
- Prison
- **Third Sector**
- Courts
- MoD
- **Governments of England, Scotland, and Wales**

Overall, this report has provided a detailed insight into the experiences of ex-service personnel who come into contact with the CJS. They often have complex needs and this report has attempted to give voice to the issues, concerns and experiences of this group. Importantly, there are many areas in which improvements can be made to both reduce the risk of offending and reoffending as well as provide more tailored and stronger support during and following contact with the CJS. We believe that a focused, evidence-based approach to addressing the needs outlined in this report may divert some away from the justice system, and help ensure that others are more likely to be able to access the support they need. We hope the findings encourage more research and policy interventions for the benefit of ex-service personnel in contact with the justice system and those at risk of contact.

Identifying and supporting ex-service personnel through each stage of the justice system can equip them with the tools they need to move away from criminal behaviour and live fulfilling lives not only as someone who has been in contact with the justice system, but also as former members of the Armed Forces.

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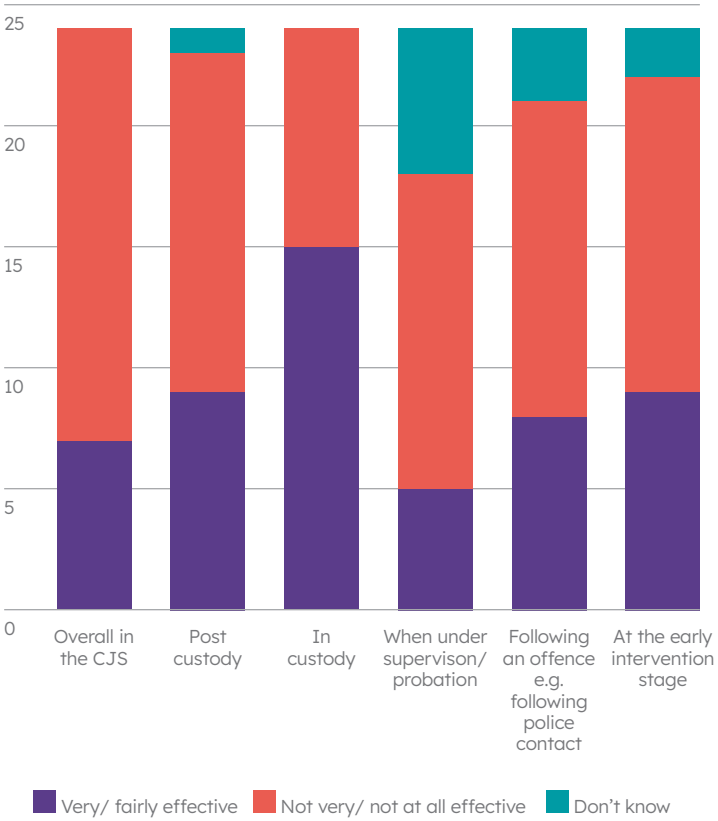
Appendix A

Appendix A.1: Stakeholder Survey Findings

A.1.1: Perceptions of effectiveness of identification of ex-service personnel in the CJS

Participants were asked 'how effective do you think current mechanisms are for identifying ex-service personnel at different points within the criminal justice process?' The figure below shows that only seven out of 24 participants thought the CJS overall was 'very' or 'fairly effective', the majority thought it was 'not very' or 'not at all effective' (17). Of the various stages, participants were most likely to think the system was 'very' or 'fairly effective' at the custody stage with 15 of the 24 agreeing.

Figure A.1.1: How effective do you think current mechanisms are for identifying ex-service personnel at different points within the criminal justice process?



Fourteen participants had suggestions about how the identification of ex-service personnel in the CJS could be improved. The main suggestions were the introduction of the veteran national ID card (3), collaboration and data sharing (3), raising awareness amongst ex-service personnel about why it is beneficial to identify themselves (3) and making sure that the question is asked.

'Veteran status identified at the earliest of opportunities, the roll out of the veteran national ID card.'

'By collaboration of all the agencies that deal with veterans and passing the information on in a lawful way (GDPR).'

'Bust the myths of identifying themselves.'

'Basic questions being asked by attending police officers and its essential they are asked in custody. this can change the entire trajectory.'

It should be noted here that the Office for Veterans' Affairs in 2022 committed to implementing mechanisms to offer the digital verification of veteran status (Office for Veterans' Affairs, 2022). To this effect, the OVA committed to delivering 'Veterans' ID Cards', which it aims to provide to service leavers who left the Armed Forces before December 2018 by the end of 2023[35]. It appears, therefore, that practitioners in the justice system may be able to use ID cards to better identify ex-service personnel in the CJS.

Other suggestions included having a peer network; the national insurance number for ex-service personnel being coded differently, having a service database, changing the timing of identification in prison to pre-release, changing the database to prompt identification and enabling referral in probation and funding first-line services to engage with ex-service personnel in the criminal justice system. In addition, one participant commented:

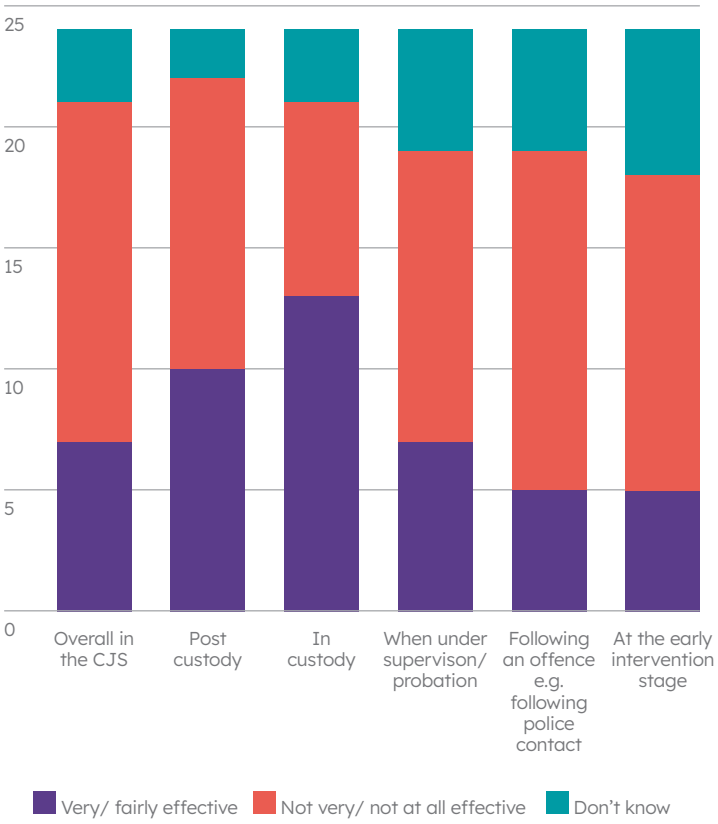
'The long overdue issue of the MOD90 marked with veteran status would be a start, along with a streamlined system for checks.'

[35] Source: Ministry of Defence and Office for Veterans' Affairs. Accessed October 2023: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/continued-progress-has-been-made-towards-the-new-digital-verification-service-to-apply-for-a-hm-armed-forces-veteran-card

A.1.2: Perceptions of effectiveness of support for ex-service personnel in the CJS

Participants were asked for those that entered the CJS, how comprehensive do you think the support available to service personnel and their families is currently? As in the case of identification, participants were most likely to select 'fairly effective' or 'very effective' for custody and for all other stages, participants were more likely to select 'not very effective 'or 'not at all effective'.

Figure A.1.2: For those that have entered the CJS, how comprehensive do you think the support available to ex-service personnel and their families currently is?



Ten participants suggested ways they feel that support for ex-service personnel can be improved. A collaborative approach and better communication between agencies were recommended by responding participants.

'A joined-up approach and recognition for the veteran status would avoid losing the veteran in the system.'

Awareness raising of services and ways in which people can refer into services and support, dissemination of materials, use of social media and advertisements.

'It is about awareness. The sector could do better at getting its message into the right places.'

Other improvements related to increased funding for specialist organisations that understand the needs of ex-service personnel; having a single point of contact; having more time to triage whilst in custody on reception and release; referrals into charities and diversion away from courts; improving support services for alcohol and drugs; by having regional or national identification and data systems. Comments were:

'More funding to places charities like Care After Combat into the CJS rather than leaving the support to the prison service who do not understand the intricacies of dealing with veterans and the possible complex issues they may have.'

'Greater access to information during police custody - access to questionnaire and referral material as a standard. Greater dissemination of published material and self-referral routes; social media and advertisements.'

'More time to triage at point of reception into custodial settings and on release.'

'As mentioned earlier too many charities are involved, instead a single contact point would be preferable.'

'By having data base within all counties having all veterans on this data.'

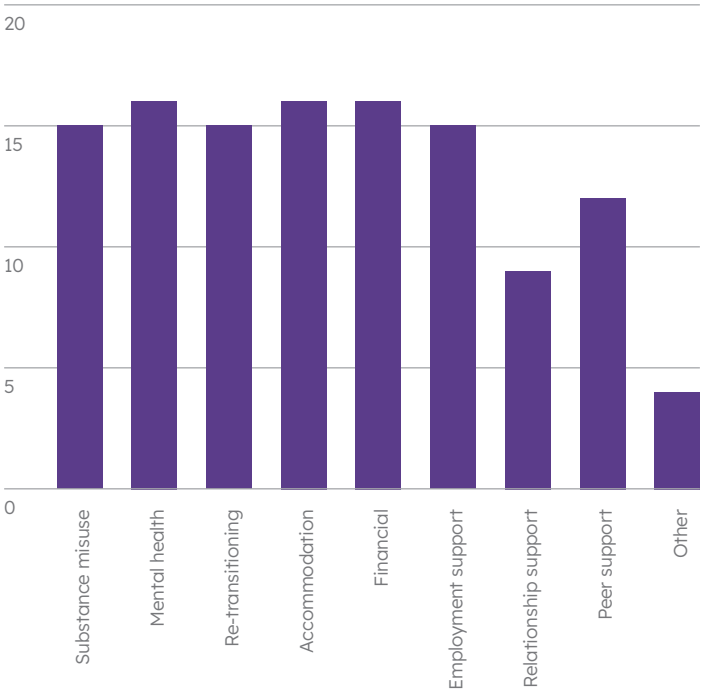
'Early identification and fast track to other facilities.'

'Referrals into charities and diversion schemes radically reduce re-offending as opposed to court.'

'UK wide identification, UK wide first-line support. Then provision of specialist services for individual needs is often strong, with the exception of support for alcohol and drugs.'

When asked about the needs of ex-service personnel and their families, respondents highlighted that mental health (16), accommodation (16), and financial assistance (16) were the predominant areas in which they provided support, as illustrated in Figure A.1.3. 15 respondents highlighted substance misuse and re-transition support.

Figure A.1.3: What needs do you find that ex-military service personnel and their families have that are supported by your organisation?

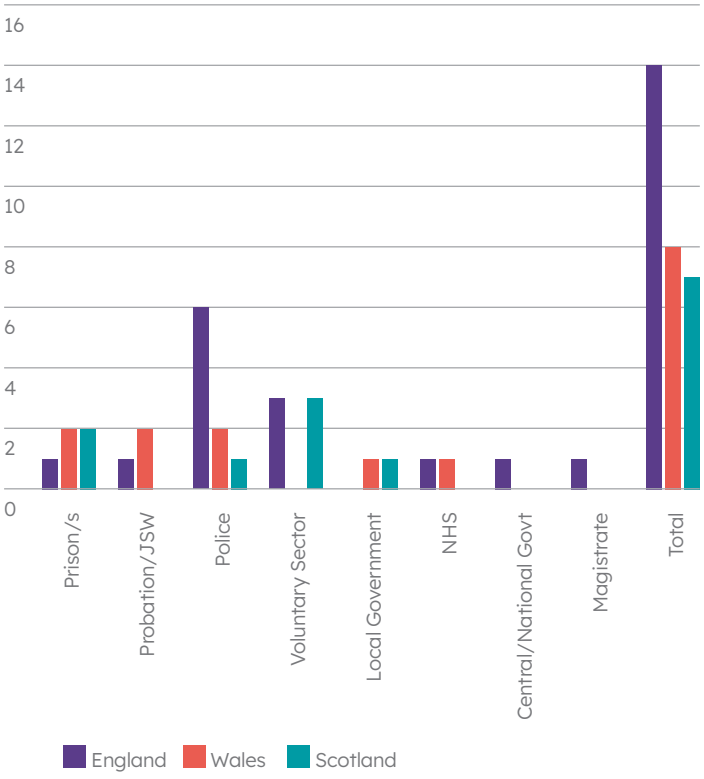


Appendix A.2: Breakdown of semi-structured interviews across England, Scotland, and Wales

A.2.1: National interviews

By April 2022, 29 online interviews had been completed, with a national breakdown of 14 interviews in England, eight in Wales and seven in Scotland. As Figure 1 shows below, the sample has good coverage across different organisations, though it is acknowledged the sample has gaps within organisations nationally and that a higher proportion of individuals participated from the police. The participation of representatives from within each nation is summarised below.

Figure A.2.1: Breakdown of National Interviews by Country and Organisation



We interviewed 14 individuals whose professional role was based in England. Police Interviews in England were conducted with representatives from Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Cleveland, Humberside, South Yorkshire and Suffolk, where participants tended to be either armed forces champions within the force or other police officers either with front-line experience, or who worked in custody areas. In Wales and Scotland, by contrast, the small number of police participants were employed in more strategic roles rather than on the front line or in custody suites. In regard to other stages of the CJS in England, one interview was conducted with a representative from the Probation Institute, whilst a further interview was undertaken with a VICSO, at a prison within the Yorkshire region. There was one representative from L&D and there was one magistrate. One voluntary sector interview was completed with SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association), which operates across England, Wales and Scotland.

Eight interviews in total were completed with individuals whose professional role was based in Wales. Two interviews were conducted with police, representatives from the probation service and prisons across different parts of the country, in addition to interviews with representatives from Local Government and NHS.

In Scotland, seven interviews in total were completed with individuals whose professional role was based there. Scotland has a distinct legal and criminal justice system from England and Wales. Of the seven national interviews completed in Scotland, one was conducted with Police Scotland, and two with participants from prisons. Three participants came from the voluntary sector, including from SSAFA, Sacro, Poppyscotland and Citizens Advice Scotland, with a final interview with the Department of Work and Pensions. Participants were therefore interviewed from a broad range of statutory and voluntary agencies.

A.2.2: Demographic information of local interviews

In total, 71 interviews were conducted with key stakeholders as part of the local phase of the research with 40 occurring in England, 18 in Scotland and 13 in Wales. The graph below shows the spread of interviews across by organisation and country.

Figure A.2.2.1: Breakdown of stakeholder interviews by country and organisation

It is important to note that participation in the interview was voluntary so, in certain cases, those who were considered as relevant to participate did not respond to the invitation or subsequent reminders.

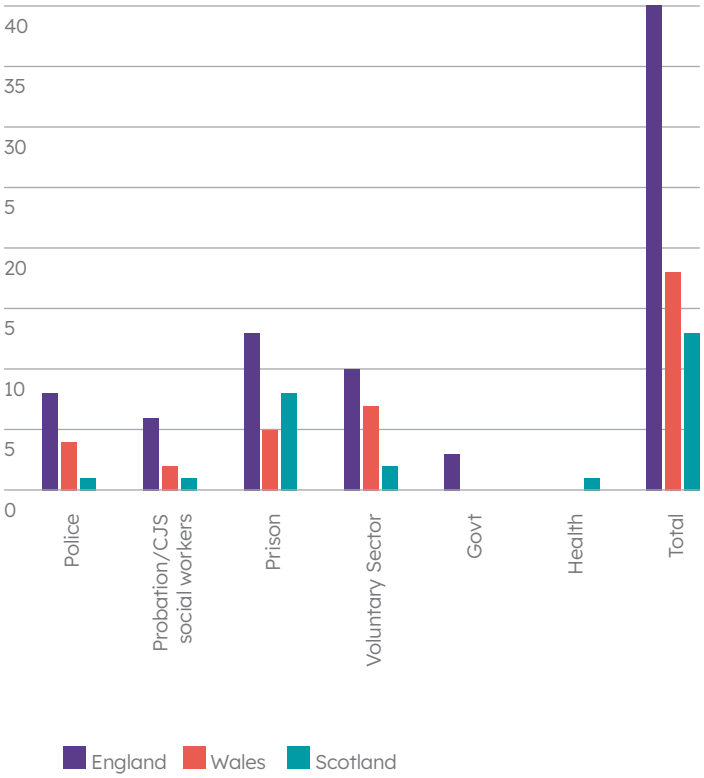


Figure A.2.2.2: Breakdown of ex-service personnel interviews by country

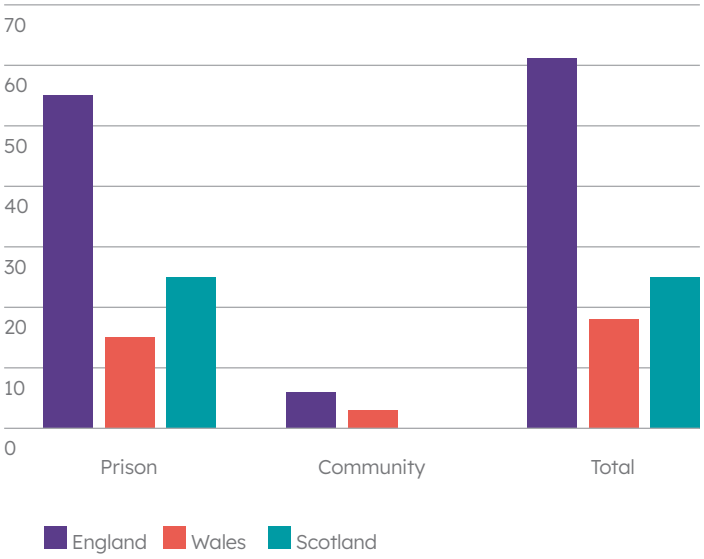
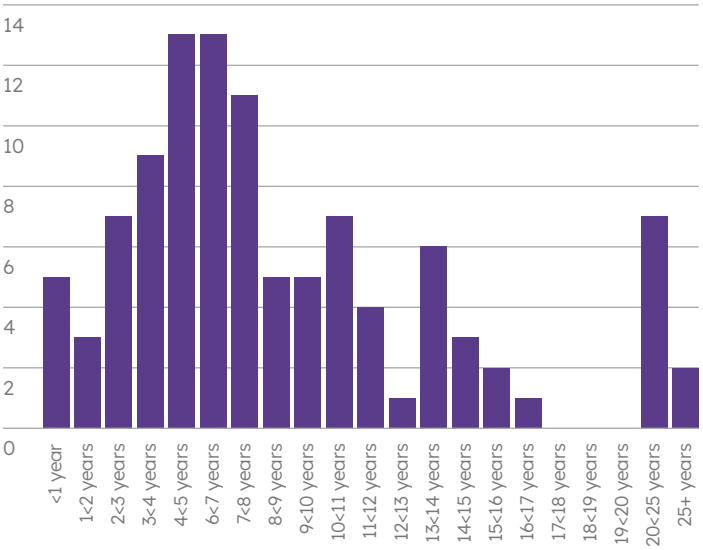


Figure A.2.2.3: Time spent in service of ex-service personnel interviewed



95 interviews were conducted with ex-service personnel who were in prison at the time of interview, whilst nine were under supervision in the community (some of whom had previously been in prison), and one was no longer under supervision but had been under the supervision of probation previously. A total of 58% (61) of the sample were from England, 24% (25) from Scotland and 17% (18) were from Wales.

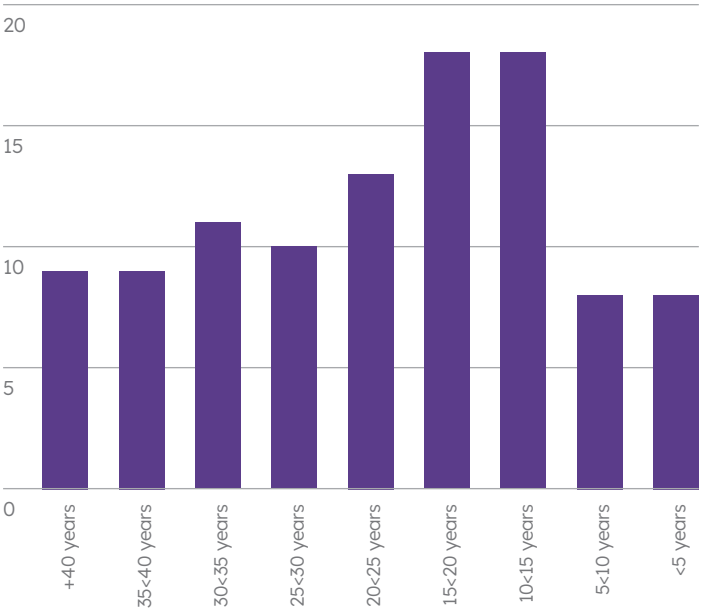
Most individuals interviewed had served in the Army (n=87) with smaller proportions having served in the Royal Navy (n=12) and Royal Airforce (n=7)[36].

Over a third of the sample had served less than 5 years in the Armed Forces (n=37), a similar proportion had served 5<10 years (n=41) and the remaining quarter had served 10 years or above (n=26). Figure 3.3 provides a more detailed breakdown of time in service. This demonstrates a good range of length of service across the sample.

The table below shows the average length of service, with only nine respondents (<1% of our sample) having reported serving for 22 years or more.

Only 8% (8) had been out of the service for less than 5 years, 8% (8) for 5<10 years, 17% (18) had been out of the service for 10<15 years and two-thirds (69, 67%) had been out of the service for 15 years or more. Based on this sample, 27% (28) had been out of the services for 30 years or more. See the figure below (A2.2.4) for more details.

Figure A.2.2.4: Length of time ex-service personnel interviewed had been out of services at the time of the interview



[36] The total comes to 106 as some Veterans had served in more than one Armed Forces.

The most common self-reported offence type within the sample was sexual offending (40, 38%) which contained a range of offences including rape and inappropriate communication with or viewing images of children online. The second most common self-reported offence type was those involving violence against the person (21, 20%) which ranges in severity from murder to actual bodily harm, followed by drug offences (12, 12%). It should be noted for 15% (16) of cases the offence type was not declared.

Figure A.2.2.5: Types within the sample

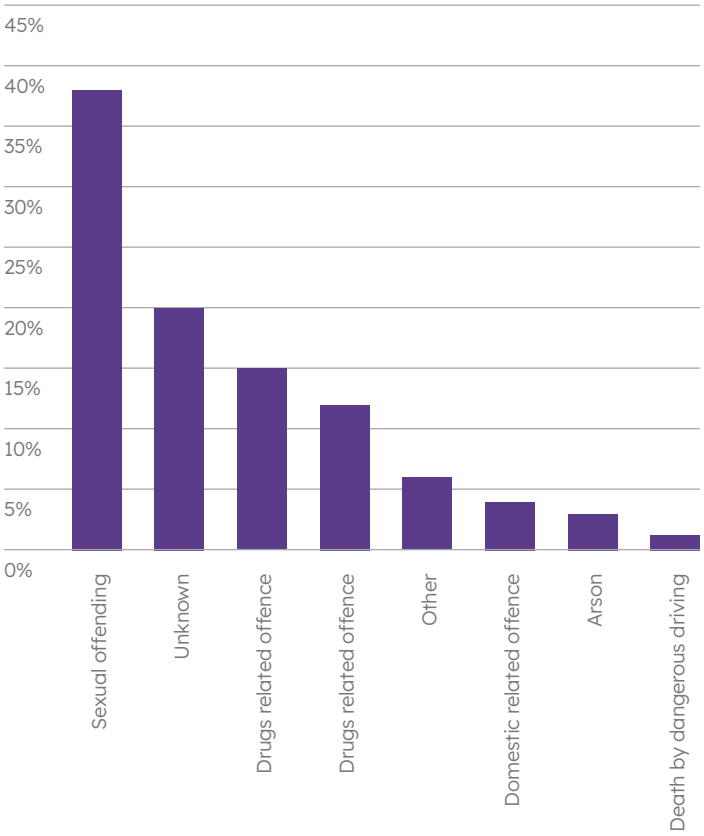
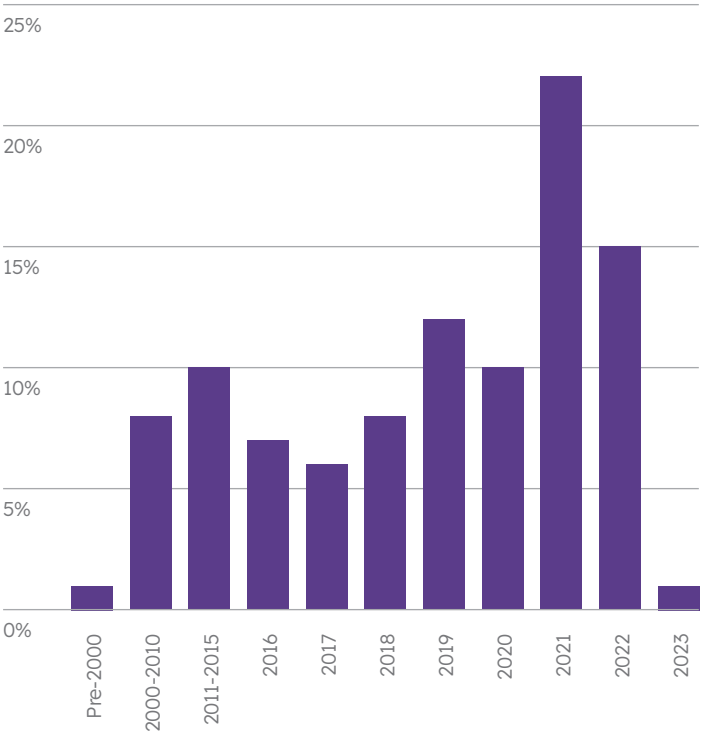


Figure A.2.2.6 illustrates the approximate timing of ex-service personnel's contact with the CJS for the current offence and shows that a little over a third (38%) of individuals came into contact after 2020[37].

Figure A.2.2.6: Approximate time ex-service personnel came into contact with the CJS for their current offence:



[37] In 13% (14) cases it was not stated when the ex-service personnel had come into contact with the CJS and therefore, they are excluded from the figure below.

Appendix B

Appendix B.1: Forces in Mind Trust Key Stakeholder Survey (template)

Introduction

Nacro and its partners the Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice (IPSCJ) and the Institute for Social Innovation and Impact (ISII) have been commissioned by the FiMT to review the current processes and mechanisms in place for identifying and supporting ex-military service personnel within the criminal justice system of England, Wales and Scotland. The project seeks to identify any shortcomings in the current system and make practical recommendations on:

1. How the identification of ex-military service personnel could be improved, and
2. How the barriers to the uptake of support (for both ex-military service personnel in the criminal justice system and their families) can be overcome.

You are being invited to take part in this survey because you are involved in supporting ex-military service personnel within the criminal justice system in England, Wales and Scotland.

Your participation in the research is voluntary. If you decide to take part in the survey but then change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the research at any time before 31 January 2022 by contacting matthew.callender@northampton.ac.uk

The survey will ask you about your knowledge, opinions and perspectives on the current processes and mechanisms in place for identifying ex-military service personnel within the criminal justice system of England, Wales and Scotland. You will be asked to share your views on current practice and to identify any shortcomings and/or barriers to support. All the findings from the surveys will be anonymised, we will never reveal your identity, where you live, or the organisation you work for. Taking part in this research provides you with the opportunity to offer your opinions and perspectives on the support available for ex-military service personnel, in an environment where your thoughts will be respected.

All the information collected for this research will be stored securely on password- protected computers on the University of Northampton networked drives. This information will be accessed by the researcher team. No information that identifies you will be used in the research.

The results of this research will be presented to the FiMT and may be used for further research and publication. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Northampton, the National Research Council and the Scottish Prison Service.

All the data is securely stored in accordance with the GDPR 2018 legislation (to know more about the GDPR regulation please visit https://eugdpr.org). By law, you can ask us what information we hold about you, and you can ask us to correct it if it is inaccurate.

You can also ask for it to be erased and you can ask for us to give you a copy of the information. You can also ask us to stop using your information – the simplest way to do this is to send us an email by using the contact details above. We will be able to withdraw or change your information until 31 January 2022, afterwards it will not be possible because the results will be produced and published.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, then please contact matthew.callender@northampton.ac.uk

By taking part you are agreeing that you understand:

- It is your choice whether you get involved and complete the survey
- You do not have to answer anything that you do not want to and can leave the survey at any time
- Your participation will remain confidential, and will be anonymised
- The anonymised data will be stored for 5 years. You will be asked at the end of the survey whether you are happy to be contacted about the research and if so provide your preferred contact details. These contact details will be extracted and stored separately from the main survey file to maintain confidentiality. This personal data will only be kept until the end of the project (31st January 2023) at which point it will be deleted from the University of Northampton network drives.
- You may withdraw your answers, or discuss the evaluation and your participation in it, by contacting matthew.callender@northampton.ac.uk.

1. I have read the information above and am happy to participate in this survey: *Required*

☐ *Yes*

☐ *No*

The survey consists of three sections:

Section 1: Your organisation which asks questions specifically about your organisation, how it supports ex-military service personnel and their families and about facilitators and barriers to providing support.

Section 2: General support available to ex-military service personnel and their families which asks questions about your views on the general provision of support available to ex-military service personnel and their families.

Section 3: Ex-military service personnel within the Criminal Justice System which asks questions about your views on the identification of ex-military service personnel in the Criminal Justice System and the support available to them.

Section 1: Your Organisation

This section asks questions specifically about your organisation, how it supports ex- military service personnel and their families and about facilitators and barriers to providing support.

2. Please can you state the organisation that you work for:

3. In what capacity does your organisation work with ex-military service personnel and their families?

4. Where in the UK does your organisation provide support? (please tick all that apply)

- ☐ East of England
- ☐ East Midlands
- ☐ London
- ☐ North East England
- ☐ North West England
- ☐ Scotland
- ☐ South East England
- ☐ South West England
- ☐ Wales
- ☐ West Midlands
- ☐ Yorkshire
- ☐ Other

4a. If you selected Other, please specify:

5. By what mechanisms do ex-military service personnel come into contact with your organisation? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Via the police
- ☐ Accident and Emergency wards
- ☐ Mental health teams
- ☐ Probation services
- ☐ Prison services (including ViCSOs)
- ☐ Drug and alcohol misuse services Self-referral
- ☐ Social prescribing/link workers/GPs
- ☐ Charities
- ☐ Adult Social Care
- ☐ via The Courts
- ☐ Not applicable
- ☐ Other

5a. Please specify:

5b. What is the most common route of referral?

6. What needs do you find that ex-military service personnel and their families have that are supported by your organisation?

- ☐ Substance misuse
- ☐ Mental health (including 1:1 and group interventions)
- ☐ Re-transitioning
- ☐ Accommodation
- ☐ Financial Employment support
- ☐ Relationship support
- ☐ Peer support
- ☐ Other

6a. Please specify:

7. To what extent do you think your organisation is currently able to support the needs of ex-military service personnel and their families?

- ☐ Very well
- ☐ Fairly well
- ☐ Not very well
- ☐ Not at all well
- ☐ No opinion
- ☐ Prefer not to say

8. What are the facilitators to your organisation being able to provide effective support to ex-military service personnel and their families?

9. What are the barriers to your organisation being able to provide effective support to ex-military service personnel and their families?

10. How regularly does your organisation work with ex-military service personnel that are within the CJS?

- ☐ Very regularly
- ☐ Fairly regularly
- ☐ Not very regularly
- ☐ Not at all regularly
- ☐ Prefer not to say

11. Please can you select the points within the Criminal Justice System where you have involvement (please tick all that apply)

- ☐ At the early intervention stage with those at risk of offending
- ☐ Following an offence e.g. following police contact
- ☐ When under supervision/ probation/ community order
- ☐ In custody
- ☐ Post custody Other

11a. If you selected Other, please specify:

11b. Please provide any further detail here about support you offer to those within the Criminal Justice System:

Section 2: General support available to ex-military service personnel and their families

This section asks questions about your views on the general provision of support available to ex-military service personnel and their families.

12. Overall, how comprehensive do you think the support available to ex-military service personnel and their families is currently?

- ☐ Very comprehensive
- ☐ Fairly comprehensive
- ☐ Not very comprehensive
- ☐ Not at all comprehensive
- ☐ I don't know

12a. Please give a reason for your answer:

13. Are there particular needs of ex-military service personnel and their families for which you feel that there is a good level of service provision?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

13a. If yes, please specify what these needs are and why you think there is a good level of service provision.

14. Are there particular needs of ex-military service personnel and their families for which you feel that there is a poor level of service provision?

14a. If yes, please specify what these needs are and why you think there is a poor level of service provision.

15. How do you think the support offered to ex-military service personnel could be improved?

16. What, if any, do you think are the facilitators to ex-military service personnel seeking support?

17. What, if any do you think are the barriers to ex-military service personnel seeking support?

Section 3: Ex-service personnel within the Criminal Justice System

This section asks questions about your views on the identification of ex-military service personnel in the Criminal Justice System and the support available to them.

18. How effective do you think current mechanisms are for identifying ex-military service personnel at different points within the criminal justice process?

At the early intervention stage

- ☐ Very effective
- ☐ Fairly effective
- ☐ Not very effective
- ☐ Not at all effective
- ☐ Don't know

Following an offence e.g. following police contact

- ☐ Very effective
- ☐ Fairly effective
- ☐ Not very effective
- ☐ Not at all effective
- ☐ Don't know

When under supervision/ probation/ community order

- ☐ Very effective
- ☐ Fairly effective
- ☐ Not very effective
- ☐ Not at all effective
- ☐ Don't know

In custody

- ☐ Very effective
- ☐ Fairly effective
- ☐ Not very effective
- ☐ Not at all effective
- ☐ Don't know

Post custody

- ☐ Very effective
- ☐ Fairly effective
- ☐ Not very effective
- ☐ Not at all effective
- ☐ Don't know

Overall in the CJS

- ☐ Very effective
- ☐ Fairly effective
- ☐ Not very effective
- ☐ Not at all effective
- ☐ Don't know

18a. Please add any comments about your choices above regarding the effectiveness of identification of ex-military service personnel in the CJS.

19. Do you have any suggestions of how the identification of ex-military service personnel in the Criminal Justice System could be improved?

19a. If yes, please outline them here:

20. For those that have entered the criminal justice system, how comprehensive do you think the support available to ex-military service personnel and their families currently is?

At the early intervention stage

- ☐ Very effective
- ☐ Fairly effective
- ☐ Not very effective
- ☐ Not at all effective
- ☐ Don't know

Following an offence e.g. following police contact

- ☐ Very effective
- ☐ Fairly effective
- ☐ Not very effective
- ☐ Not at all effective
- ☐ Don't know

When under supervision/ probation/ community order

- ☐ Very effective
- ☐ Fairly effective
- ☐ Not very effective
- ☐ Not at all effective
- ☐ Don't know

In custody

- ☐ Very effective
- ☐ Fairly effective
- ☐ Not very effective
- ☐ Not at all effective
- ☐ Don't know

Post custody

- ☐ Very effective
- ☐ Fairly effective
- ☐ Not very effective
- ☐ Not at all effective
- ☐ Don't know

Overall in the CJS

- ☐ Very effective
- ☐ Fairly effective
- ☐ Not very effective
- ☐ Not at all effective
- ☐ Don't know

20a. Please add any comments about your choices above regarding the support available to ex-military service personnel and their families in the CJS.

21. Do you have any suggestions of how support available to ex-military service personnel and families within the criminal justice system could be improved?

21a. If yes, please outline them here:

Further information

As part of the project, the research team will also be conducting interviews with key stakeholders to further enhance the picture of how identification of ex-military service personnel in the CJS and the provision of support available to them can be improved.

22. If you would be happy to be contacted about this aspect of the research and potentially participate in an interview, please provide your preferred contact details below. A member of the research team will then be in contact to provide you with more details of what participation would involve.

Thank you for your time

If you have any questions about the research or your participation in it please contact matthew.callender@northampton.ac.uk

Appendix B.2: Participant Information Sheet, ex-service personnel

Participant Information Sheet

Research on the support provided for ex-service personnel involved with the Criminal Justice System

The study and purpose of the research

Nacro and its partners, the Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice (IPSCJ) and the Institute for Social Innovation and Impact (ISII) (research institutes of the University of Northampton) have been funded by the FiMT to review the current systems in place for identifying and supporting ex-service personnel within the criminal justice systems of England, Wales and Scotland.

Our project seeks to identify any problems in the current system and make practical recommendations on:

1. How the identification of ex-service personnel could be improved, and
2. How the barriers to the uptake of support (for both ex-service personnel in the criminal justice system and their families) can be overcome.

Why have I been invited?

You are being invited to take part in this research because you have current or recent experience of the criminal justice system and have identified yourself as having previously served in the Armed Forces. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take some time to read the information provided. If you have any further questions or if there is anything you do not understand, please do not hesitate to ask for more information.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation in the research is voluntary. If you do decide to take part in an interview or focus group, you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm you understand what the project involves and are happy to participate. If you decide to take part but then change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the research or withdraw any data you have provided at any time up to 2 weeks following participation.

What will my participation involve?

Taking part in this research will involve answering some questions in a virtual or physical interview or focus group. We would like to hear your opinions and perspectives on the current systems in place for identifying ex-service personnel within the criminal justice system of England, Wales and Scotland. You will be asked to share your views on current practice and to identify any problems and/or barriers to support. All the findings from the interviews or focus groups will be anonymous, so we will never reveal your identity. Taking part in this research will not impact your community or prison sentence or your licence period and provides you with the opportunity to offer your opinions on the support available for ex-service personnel, in an environment where your thoughts will be respected.

Will my information be kept confidential?

All the information collected for this research will remain anonymous and will be stored securely on password-protected computers, the University of Northampton networked drives and Nacro networked drives. This information will be accessed by the researcher team. No information which identifies you will be used in the research.

What will happen to the results of this research?

The results of this research will be presented to the FiMT and may be used for further research and publication. Anybody who wishes to see their own interview transcript may do so by contacting the email address below.

What if something goes wrong?

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, then please contact the research team on the details provided below:

- Dr Matthew Callender (matthew.callender@northampton.ac.uk)
- Professor Richard Hazenberg (richard.hazenberg@northampton.ac.uk)
- Dr Claire Paterson-Young (claire.paterson-young@northampton.ac.uk)
- Kathryn Cahalin (Kathryn.cahalin@northampton.ac.uk)
- Neil Cornish (neil.cornish@northampton.ac.uk)
- Mallika Singh (mallika.singh@nacro.org.uk)
- Andrea Coady (andrea.coady@nacro.org.uk)

Thank you for considering taking part in this research

Appendix B.3: Participant Information Sheet: Stakeholders

Participant Information Sheet

Research on the support provided for ex-service personnel involved with the Criminal Justice System

The study

Nacro and its partners, the Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice (IPSCJ) and the Institute for Social Innovation and Impact (ISII) (research institutes of the University of Northampton) have been commissioned by the FiMT to review the current process and mechanisms in place for identifying and supporting ex-service personnel within the criminal justice system of England, Wales and Scotland. Our project seeks to identify any shortcomings in the current system and make practical recommendations on:

1. How the identification of ex-service personnel could be improved, and
2. How the barriers to the uptake of support (for both ex-service personnel in the criminal justice system and their families) can be overcome.

Why have I been invited?

You are being invited to take part in the research because you are involved in supporting ex-service personnel within the criminal justice system in your local area. Before you decide whether to take part in the research, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take some time to read the information provided. If you have any further questions or if there is anything you do not understand, please do not hesitate to ask for more information.

What is the purpose of this research?

The research aims to review the current processes and mechanisms in place for identifying ex-service personnel within the criminal justice system of England, Wales and Scotland. It seeks to identify any shortcomings and make practical recommendations on how identification could be improved and to examine the barriers to uptake of support for both ex-service personnel in the criminal justice system and their families. The research team is interested in learning more about the services provided within your local area and, as such, we will speak with representatives of local services, ex-service personnel and their families.

Do I have to take part?

No, your participation in the research is voluntary. If you do decide to take part in an interview, you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm that you understand what the project involves and are happy to participate. If you decide to take part but then change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the research or withdraw any data you have provided at any time up to 2 weeks following participation.

What will my participation involve?

Taking part in this research will involve answering some questions in a virtual or physical interview. You will be asked to share your views on current, local practice and to identify any shortcomings and/or barriers to support. All the findings from the interviews will be anonymous, we will never reveal your identity, where you live, or the organisation where you work. Taking part in this research provides you the opportunity to offer your opinions and perspectives on the support available for ex-service personnel, in an environment where your thoughts will be respected.

Will my information be kept confidential?

All the information collected for this research will remain anonymous and will be stored securely on password-protected computers, the University of Northampton networked drives and Nacro networked drives. This information will be accessed by the researcher team. No information which identifies you will be used in the research.

What will happen to the results of this research?

The results of this research will be presented to the FiMT and may be used for further research and publication. Anybody who wishes to see their own transcript may do so by contacting the email address below.

Who has reviewed the research?

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Northampton, the National Research Council at Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and the Scottish Prison Service.

What if something goes wrong?

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, then please contact the research team on the details provided below:

- Dr Matthew Callender (matthew.callender@northampton.ac.uk)
- Professor Richard Hazenberg (richard.hazenberg@northampton.ac.uk)
- Dr Claire Paterson-Young (claire.paterson-young@northampton.ac.uk)
- Kathryn Cahalin (Kathryn.cahalin@northampton.ac.uk)
- Neil Cornish (neil.cornish@northampton.ac.uk)
- Mallika Singh (mallika.singh@nacro.org.uk)
- Andrea Coady (andrea.coady@nacro.org.uk)

Thank you for considering taking part in this research

Appendix B.4: Interview guide, ex-service personnel

Ex-service personnel interviews:- Identification and Support provided in the Criminal Justice System

Background and Service Questions

1. Local area, age, and where are they from originally?
2. When did you join the Armed Forces and why did you join?
3. Can you provide a brief overview of your experiences in the Armed Forces?

   E.g. Deployments
4. How would you describe your transitions from Armed Forces to civilian life?
   - When did you leave?
   - What support was provided?
   - What was managed well?
   - What was managed poorly?

Home and Family Life

5. Did you return to family life after leaving the forces? (current family situation)
6. Do you think your time in the Forces affected your behaviour/decision-making at home?
7. Did you seek support for anything when leaving the Forces? (e.g. housing, employment? From where? How would you describe accessing this? Assessment of support offered?)
8. Any help for your family (e.g. in adapting to you being around, major lifestyle change for them)?

Criminal Justice System

9. Can you tell me about your first contact with the Criminal Justice System?
   - Offence?
   - Factors contributing to the offence?
   - Key event/series of events contributing?
10. Do you think your Services background contributed to your offending?
11. Did any offending start during your time in the Forces or after Discharge? (how was it dealt with? Formally/Informally?)

Identification

12. For this most recent offence, do you remember how and when you were first asked about having served in the Armed Forces?

Stage	Yes, asked and identified	No, not asked/ Identified	Can't remember
Pre-arrest			
Police Station			
Court (Bail/ Remand/PSR/ Social Inquiry Report)			
Probation/JSW			
Prison Reception			
Prison Induction			
Pre-release			
Post-release			

13. When asked, did you identify yourself as a former service personnel? (If not, why not? e.g. personal reasons, advised not to disclose etc)
14. When do you think is a good and/or bad time to ask someone about their service history?
15. When you were first identified, do you think this made any difference to the way staff (police, probation, prison, judiciary) saw you?
16. Did this identification make any difference to the support you were offered?
17. How do you think identification of Veterans could be improved? (e.g. at what point in the CJS could identification be improved?)

Support

18. Have you been offered specific support for Veterans at different stages of the Criminal Justice System?

Stage	Yes, support	Type of support	No support
Pre-arrest			
Arrest			
Bail or Remand			
Court			
Community Order			
Custody			
Post Custody (only relevant if on licence or previous sentence)			

19. What do you think are the barriers to Veterans accessing support? (e.g. at different stages of the CJS, personal reasons etc)
20. 20) Overall, how would you assess the systems of care and support available to ex-service people in the Criminal Justice System?
    - What is good about this local area?
    - What is missing or could be improved in the local area? (e.g. different points of CJS, more signposting)
    - In comparison to non-Veterans?
21. What do you think of the local services provided to families of Veterans in the Criminal Justice System? (strengths, gaps, improvements)
22. Have you accessed any local services for families of Veterans?
23. What do you think could be improved for families?
24. 24) Any further comments/questions?

Thank you for participating in this research

Appendix B.5: Interview guide, stakeholders

Local Stakeholder Interview for Research on the support provided for ex-service personnel involved with the Criminal Justice System (Approximate Interview Guide)

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your role at (insert organisation e.g. local police, probation/CJ Social Work or prison)?
2. What experience have you had supporting ex-service personnel within your organisation?
3. What support does (your organisation) provide to ex-service people and their families?
4. What are the needs of ex-service people and their families, particularly in the local area?
5. Do you think (your organisation) meets these needs?
6. Are these needs the same or different to other local areas, in your opinion?

Identification

7. How are ex-service personnel first identified within your organisation?
8. What can be done to improve the identification of ex-service people within your organisation or the system more generally?
9. Are there any barriers to identification?

Joint Working

10. Can you tell me about some of the other organisations within the local area and the work they do to support Veterans in the CJS? (Strengths/Weaknesses/Improvements)

Support

11. Please consider these criminal justice pathways

What support is currently available for ex-service personnel?

Early Intervention - available prior to arrest but identified as being at risk of entering CJS;

Point of Arrest - bail schemes/out of court disposals;

Court/Remand/Sentencing;

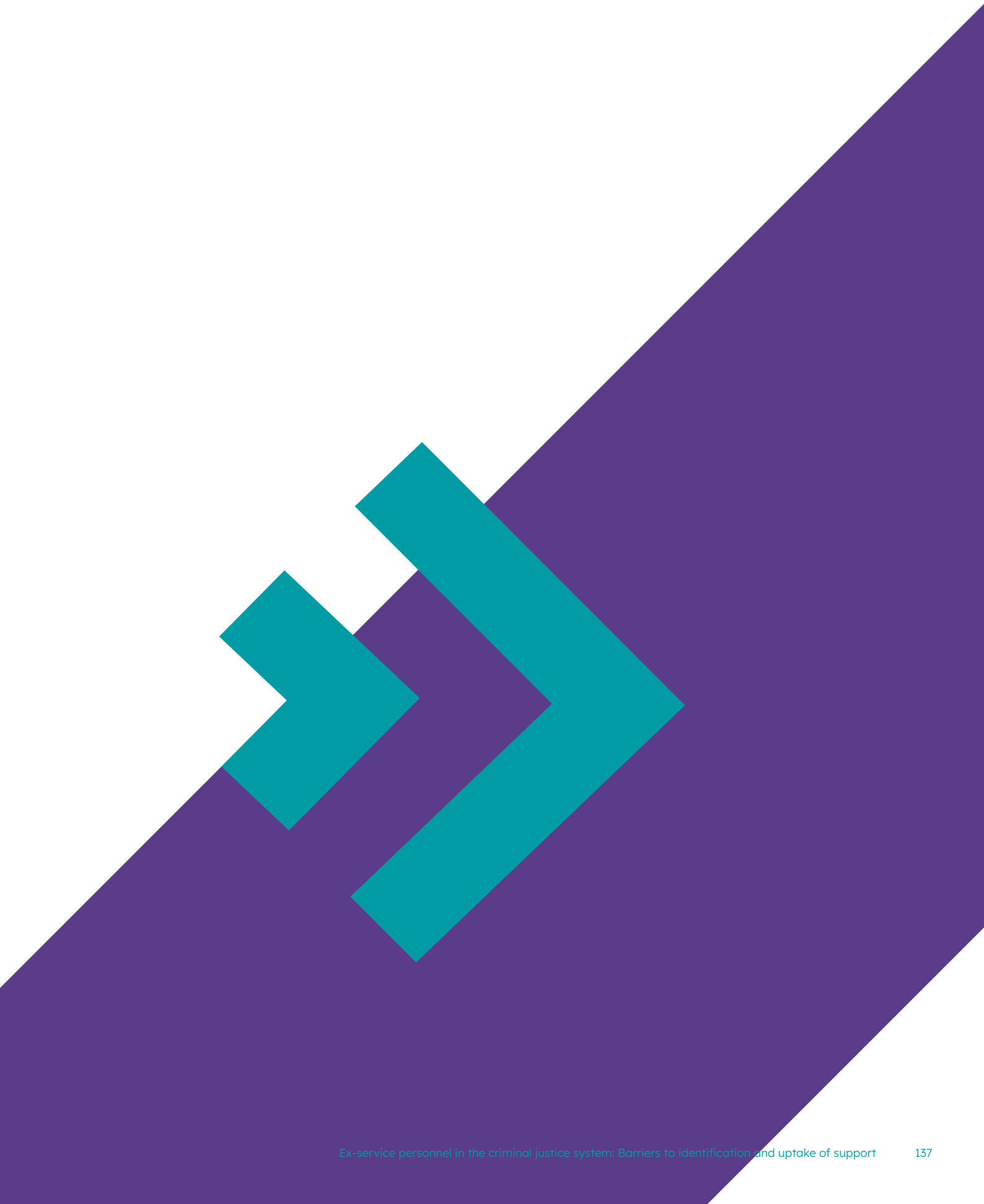
Community orders;

Custody;

Post sentence/custody - ION;

Universal - available to all ex-service personnel

12. What are your views of the support that is currently available for the families of ex-service people in your organisation?
13. What are the barriers for ex-service people in accessing support within your organisation?
14. Overall, how would you assess the provision of support in comparison to other areas? (strengths and weaknesses)
15. In an ideal world, what would your organisation do to improve the support it provides to ex-service people and their families?
16. Is there anyone else I should speak to within your organisation?
17. Do you have any further comments or questions before we end the interview?



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