



**Scottish Veterans
Commissioner**

Veterans and Employment

Review paper

June 2026

INTRODUCTION

This review of veteran employment revisits a subject that has rightly commanded sustained attention over many years. Previous Scottish Veterans Commissioners have provided detailed and thoughtful analyses, helping to shape both policy and practice. It seems fitting to return to this issue at a time when meaningful progress has been made, while also recognising that the landscape continues to evolve.

Service leavers, veterans and their families make a significant and positive contribution to Scotland's economy and society. The skills, experience and values developed through military service translate into a highly capable and resilient workforce. Employers across a range of sectors increasingly recognise these strengths: leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, and a strong work ethic are qualities that consistently add value in civilian employment. Spouses and partners, too, often demonstrate exceptional adaptability and resourcefulness, building careers alongside the demands of Service life and contributing further to economic growth.

At the same time, it is essential to acknowledge that not all transitions are straightforward. For those who are injured or ill, have other support needs and for bereaved families, additional and tailored support may be required to enable access to meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities. Ensuring that such support is available, responsive and effective must remain a central priority.

This report highlights examples of good practice and notes the progress achieved since the first comprehensive review in 2016. There is much to commend: improved collaboration between government, employers and the third sector; enhanced awareness of the value of the veteran workforce; and more structured pathways to employment. These developments reflect a growing commitment to ensuring that those who have served are supported to thrive beyond their military careers.

Nevertheless, there is more to be done. The modern workplace is changing at pace, driven by technological advancement, shifting skills demands and wider global instability. These factors present both challenges and opportunities. They underline the importance of ensuring that services, support systems and employers remain agile and forward-looking. Equally, veterans themselves must continue to be supported to adapt, upskill and navigate this changing environment.

Happily, however, flexibility and adaptability are already among the defining strengths of the veteran community. These qualities, forged through experience, will continue to serve veterans well – and, in turn, will remain of immense benefit to Scotland as a whole.

SUSIE HAMILTON

Scottish Veterans Commissioner



POLICY AND RESEARCH CONTEXT

Approach

As part of her extended tenure, the Scottish Veterans Commissioner (SVC) has undertaken a short review on veterans and employment. It is recognised that veterans and their families make a valuable contribution to Scotland's economy and can bring a breadth of skills, experience, and knowledge to an organisation as employees.

This review picks up on the themes and recommendations outlined in previous work by the SVC, with a focus on what has changed and improved over the last few years. It looks at employment for the veteran community, including those transitioning from Service into civilian life, and seeks to highlight good practice and suggest areas which require development.

Throughout the research and investigation that supported previous thematic reports published by the Scottish Veterans Commissioner¹, it has been important to find a balance between focusing on the challenges and barriers faced by the veteran community in Scotland, as well as promoting and celebrating the positive contribution they make to civilian society.

To inform this report the Office of the Scottish Veterans Commissioner has carried out a programme of external engagement with a range of stakeholders, alongside examination of relevant research and data. Due consideration has also been given to government policies and programmes at both a UK and Scotland level. This has included looking at any data available on veteran employment, reviewing programmes delivered in support of this community and looking at other sources of support and advice.

1 www.scottishveteranscommissioner.org

Policy Context

Scottish Veterans Commissioners have completed a number of reports and reviews in which the challenges and opportunities of gaining and retaining post-Service employment have been considered. Most recently, in '*Veterans and the Law*' (2024) and '*Veterans and Finance*' (2025), the Commissioner was able to highlight the many opportunities available to Service leavers in these sectors as well as showcasing some employers who actively recruit and support them. These included Barclays and Police Scotland. However, the last substantive SVC report on employment was in 2020 and much has changed since then.

This review aligns with the Employment, Education and Skills theme in the current Scottish Government Veterans Strategy Action Plan:

- Military service fosters leadership, organisational skills, resilience and specialist skills such as medical or technical expertise. Veterans – and their families – are great assets for all employment sectors, and a growing number of employers are actively targeting veterans to fill their skills gaps. Continued development beyond military service can also include a number of education options, both for the Service leavers and their families. It is also important to recognise that, during their school education, children of Service personnel and veterans sometimes need additional support to overcome the challenges arising from military life.
- **Outcome:** veterans enter appropriate employment and can continue to enhance their careers throughout their working lives.

This review also supports the core principle of the Armed Forces Covenant² that Service should result in no disadvantage when returning to civilian life.

The UK Veterans Strategy³ (updated in February 2026) commits to a more

2 www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk

3 www.gov.uk/government/publications/veterans-strategy/veterans-strategy

joined-up approach, with employment positioned as a core pillar of long-term veteran wellbeing and economic contribution.

As noted in previous reports, civil service employers can utilise the UK Government 'Great Place to Work for Veterans' Scheme⁴. This allows veterans who meet the minimum criteria for a role to progress directly to the next stage of the recruitment process. The 'Going Forward into Employment'⁵ programme is also in place for the civil service and provides opportunities for groups of people who may experience barriers to finding employment. Veterans (and their spouses) are one of the groups included in the scheme as some may struggle to make the transition to civilian employment. The programme provides work placements and fixed term contracts for up to 24 months and can lead to permanent employment. Both initiatives support veterans to access a wide range of employment opportunities within those organisations, bringing their skills, training, and qualifications to a sector where they can add value. As at the end of July 2025, there were at least 138 veterans of the regular armed forces and 54 veterans of the reserved armed forces working in the Scottish Government.

The Scottish Government approach to transforming employment support in Scotland 'No One Left Behind'⁶ is intended to underpin effective and joined-up employability support across Scotland. It has a crucial role in achieving their vision for economic transformation and tackling child poverty; and aims to deliver a system that is more tailored and responsive to the needs of people of all ages who want help and support on their journey towards, into and in work – particularly people with health conditions, disabled people and others who are disadvantaged in the labour market. Veterans can be supported by this approach, as part of the civilian community.

As part of Scotland's Devolved Employment Service: Statistical Summary Series⁷,

4 www.civil-service-careers.gov.uk/great-place-to-work-for-veterans/

5 <https://gfie.blog.gov.uk/category/veterans/>

6 www.gov.scot/publications/one-left-behind-next-steps-integration-alignment-employability-support-scotland/

7 www.gov.scot/collections/scotlands-devolved-employment-services-statistics/

data on Armed Forces veterans for No One Left Behind were reported for the first time in February 2024. In the most recent reported quarter (July to September 2025), 68 people (1%) reported being an armed forces veteran, while 5,670 (96%) reported not being an armed forces veteran. This information was unknown for 183 people (3%). The proportion of people reporting being an armed forces veteran has consistently been around 1% since this collection was introduced. As veterans make up 3.8% of the population in Scotland this would suggest they are under-represented in these statistics.

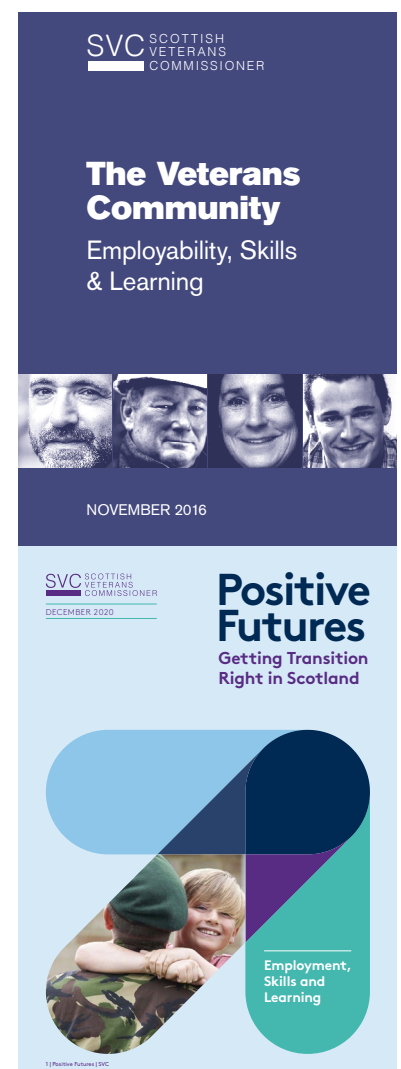
SVC Progress Reports

Reports⁸ by previous Scottish Veterans Commissioners on this topic were *'The Veterans Community – Employability, Skills and Learning'* in November 2016 and *'Positive Futures: Getting Transition Right in Scotland: Employment, Skills and Learning'* in December 2020, and these resulted in 29 recommendations that were accepted by the Scottish Government. These are assessed annually and progress is reported on through digital reports on the SVC website⁹.

One of the recommendations from the 2016 report was that the Scottish Government should *'establish a Veterans Employability Strategic Working Group of key partners to provide strategic leadership and to oversee the activity required to fulfil the ambitions of more, and better, employment'*. The Veterans Employability Strategic Group (VESG) was announced in 2017; however, it has not met since 2022. The VESG

8 www.scottishveteranscommissioner.org/documents/?catid=1

9 www.scottishveteranscommissioner.org/progress-reports/



provided strategic oversight resulting in positive achievements such as the Qualifications and Skills Discovery Tools outlined below. Stakeholders have put forward differing views on the future of the VESG.

The most recent progress assessment of the SVC recommendations, in September 2025, noted continuing work to support spouses and partners, as well as Early Service Leavers, who may face particular challenges in the labour market. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership's (SCQFP) Qualifications Tool can be found on the My World of Work website¹⁰ sitting alongside the Skills Discovery Tool, helping veterans translate their military qualifications for the civilian job market.

In recognising that a meaningful civilian career for members of the veteran community is one of the most important elements of a successful transition, it was encouraging to see ongoing work across employment, skills and learning. However, the progress assessment concluded that a more formalised structure was needed to provide strategic leadership and direction and that stronger oversight and clearer collaboration across public, private and third sector partners is needed to drive sustained improvement.

Research Context

Veterans form an important component of Scotland's labour market, with census data¹¹ confirming a sizeable population distributed across all regions. Their participation in the labour market is comparable to non-veterans, indicating that they are an active and reliable workforce cohort. Additionally, evidence consistently shows that hiring veterans generates tangible business benefits. Surveys indicate that 91% of employers experience improved organisational performance, citing stronger work ethic, discipline and problem-solving capabilities¹². These attributes contribute to higher productivity, better team

10 www.myworldofwork.co.uk/career-help/armed-forces-leavers-and-veterans-support

11 www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/2022-reports/scotland-s-census-2022-uk-armed-forces-veterans/

12 www.talk-business.co.uk/2025/04/01/veterans-offer-a-cost-effective-solution-to-workforce-challenges/

performance, and organisational resilience, particularly in complex or high-pressure sectors.

In October 2024, the Centre for Evidence for the Armed Forces Community¹³ published policy and research summaries¹⁴: *'Post-Service Employment among ex-*



Service personnel and their partners'. These comprehensive and peer-reviewed reports draw from existing research evidence and current policy and support for UK ex-Service personnel. The reports set out key findings and recommendations, with a focus on the need to map support services and improve data capture and outcome measurement (in particular longitudinal employment data), improve evaluation in support of continuous improvement, redefine definitions of 'success' in this area, and better understand the barriers to engagement.

Drawing from the findings in their 2025 report *'Understanding the Transition from Military to Civilian Life'*¹⁵, Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) published a policy brief¹⁶ on employment support in May 2026. This summary outlines six key policy issues:

- Underemployment and uneven progression
- Lack of localised cohort-specific support
- In-career preparation, timing and notice constraints
- Lack of employer awareness and understanding of transferable skills
- Inconsistent tracking of employment outcomes
- Lack of employment support for partners

The FiMT research shows that progress has been made in strengthening employment support, but offers recommendations that include reframing

13 www.centreforevidence.org

14 www.centreforevidence.org/summaries/employment

15 https://s31949.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/Transition-Study-Report_V5.pdf

16 www.fim-trust.org/news-policy-item/improving-employment-support-in-the-armed-forces-community/

measures of success, strengthening employer engagement and targeting localised support for specific cohorts.

The Centre for Evidence for the Armed Forces OUTCOMES Study¹⁷ was conducted in 2024/25 to explore the perceived benefits of military service. It identifies military Service as a source of exceptional experiences, high level and unique skills (including technical and interpersonal skills), a strong work ethic, a desire to give back and go above and beyond, and strong values.

Research demonstrates that veterans bring real value to the civilian workforce through leadership capability, reliability, adaptability, and mission focused performance. The primary barrier is not capability, but translation and utilisation of that capability.

Experiences of post-Service employment are varied and unique to each veteran. There are many factors affecting employment outcomes such as:

- Employment after lengthy or full career
- Employment after leaving Service early
- Employment by gender
- Spousal and partner employment
- Employment after discharge due to injury or illness

While experiences and outcomes differ, research has shown that there are some shared themes which can impact on gaining and retaining employment after Service. These themes are drawn together in the table at **Appendix 1**.

Almost all working-age veterans hold recognised qualifications and/or have developed practical and transferable skills through experience¹⁸. This reduces the need for extensive training and accelerates onboarding. Given that many firms

¹⁷ www.centreforevidence.org/resources/outcomes-study-investigating-the-benefits-of-military-service/article

¹⁸ www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-employers-guide-to-hiring-veterans/an-employers-guide-to-hiring-veterans-html

spend substantial sums on workforce training each year, recruiting veterans can deliver both highly effective, productive staff and direct financial savings¹⁹. From a labour market perspective, veterans play a key role in addressing structural skills shortages. They are overrepresented in sectors critical to Scotland's economy including construction, transport, and health and social care²⁰.

In serving their country, invaluable behaviours such as dedication, attention to detail and loyalty become inherent, resulting in veterans being well placed to fill existing skills gaps in Scotland's workforce. In the delivery of Scotland's economic priorities, including infrastructure, public service capacity, and regional economic resilience, veterans are a significant and valuable resource.

However, despite these advantages, there is evidence of underutilisation of veteran talent. In the UK Veterans' Survey 2020, over half of veterans reported working in roles below their skill level, often due to difficulties translating military experience into civilian employment²¹. This suggests a potential missed economic opportunity, as better alignment between skills and roles could significantly increase productivity without increasing labour supply.

Research indicates that employing veterans delivers clear economic benefits for Scotland, including improved productivity, reduced training costs, and enhanced capacity to address skills shortages. Veterans constitute a high-quality, work-ready talent pool with strengths in leadership, technical capability, and resilience.

Entrepreneurship and Business Ownership

British Veteran Owned²², a not-for-profit social enterprise that supports veteran owned businesses across the UK, has recently produced *'The Economic Power*

19 www.talk-business.co.uk/2025/04/01/veterans-offer-a-cost-effective-solution-to-workforce-challenges/

20 www.rand.org/randeurope/research/projects/2025/impact-uk-armed-forces-reservists-veterans-on-labour-market.html

21 www.gov.uk/government/publications/employment-analysis-of-uk-armed-forces-veterans/employment-skills-and-volunteering-uk-armed-forces-veterans-uk-veterans-survey-2022

22 www.britishveteranowned.co.uk

of UK Veteran-Owned Businesses'²³. Their comprehensive analysis suggests that 340,000 veteran entrepreneurs are generating £7 billion+ in turnover whilst achieving exceptional survival rates and creating tens of thousands of jobs. The report sets out key highlights around economic impact, longevity, and rates of return. However, it also flags that there may be some structural barriers at play as veterans are less likely to be self-employed (17% vs 23%).

There was interest in this in the last session of the Scottish Parliament, where data collection about veteran-owned businesses²⁴ was raised with the then Veterans Minister. This was subsequently followed up in a parliamentary question²⁵ where the Scottish Government advised that: *'The Scottish Government does not currently gather data specifically relating to the activity of veterans' start-up businesses, however we know from Scotland's Census in 2022 that around 10,000 veterans identified as self-employed. With a new UK wide Veterans' Strategy published in November 2025 and a Scottish Government commitment to refresh the 2022 Action Plan this year, the range of information gathered in relation to veterans in Scotland will be considered. We will, in formulating our Action Plan, be considering whether we need data to either assess whether there is any disadvantage faced by veterans in establishing businesses or in order to pinpoint success worth celebrating.'*

This can also extend to partners and spouses of members of the armed forces, who often experience very disrupted career patterns as they move around with their family. *'Community and Relationships: Anything but Uniform (2024)'*²⁶ identified this challenge and noted that: *'Support should be available for military partners setting up businesses in Scotland. While not for everyone, setting up in business is an effective way to overcome the disadvantage of being a Service, then veteran, partner. Self-employment has several advantages for the military family and the*

23 www.britishveteranowned.co.uk/research/economic-power

24 www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/search-what-was-said-in-parliament/meeting-of-parliament-09-12-2025?meeting=16738&iob=142956

25 www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-44022

26 www.scottishveteranscommissioner.org/report-community-relationships/

Scottish economy: it can be more flexible; can be portable; supports the local economy; supports effective transition by providing one stable income and can encourage veteran families to stay in Scotland when a business becomes established.'



EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT AND OUTCOMES

Statutory Provision

The Career Transition Partnership (CTP)²⁷ is the official resettlement service for the armed forces and is delivered through a partnership between the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and Reed in Partnership, combining government oversight with specialist employment expertise.

The current CTP contract has been in place since October 2024, and Forces Employment Charity²⁸ is a key delivery partner. CTP supports Service leavers who are transitioning from their military career into civilian employment, further education or retirement and provides structured career support to help individuals identify suitable civilian pathways that match their skills, experience, and aspirations. Support typically includes:

- ▶ One to one career advice and guidance
- ▶ Workshops and training courses (e.g. CV writing, interview skills, skills translation)
- ▶ Access to a dedicated jobs portal with veteran friendly employers
- ▶ Resettlement events, employer briefings, and job fairs
- ▶ Digital self-service tools for career planning and job search



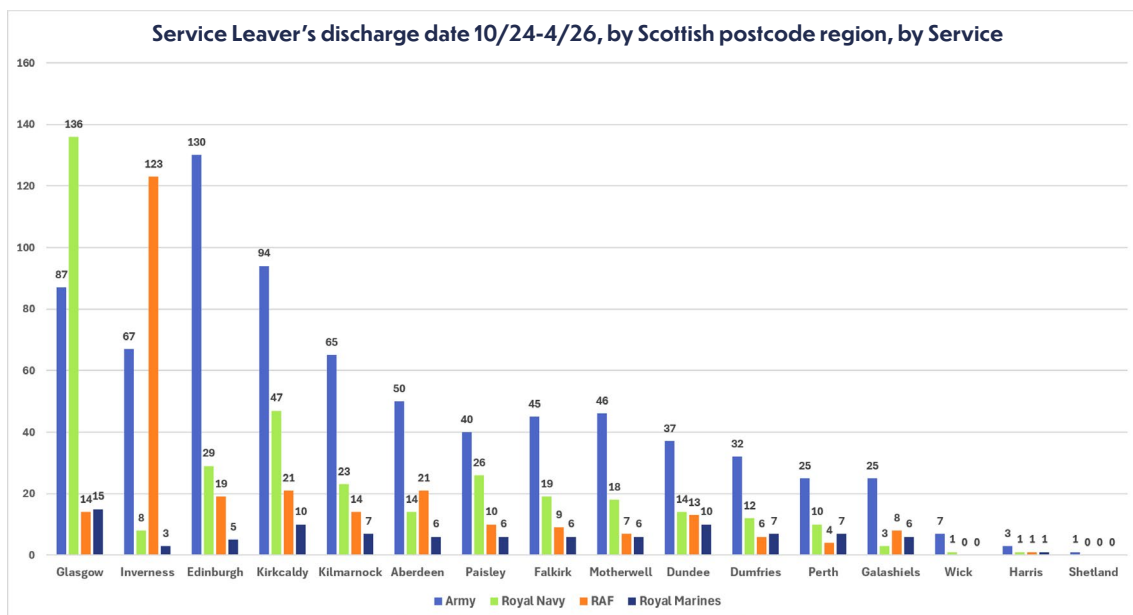
27 www.gov.uk/support-for-veterans/career-transition-partnership

28 www.forcesemployment.org.uk

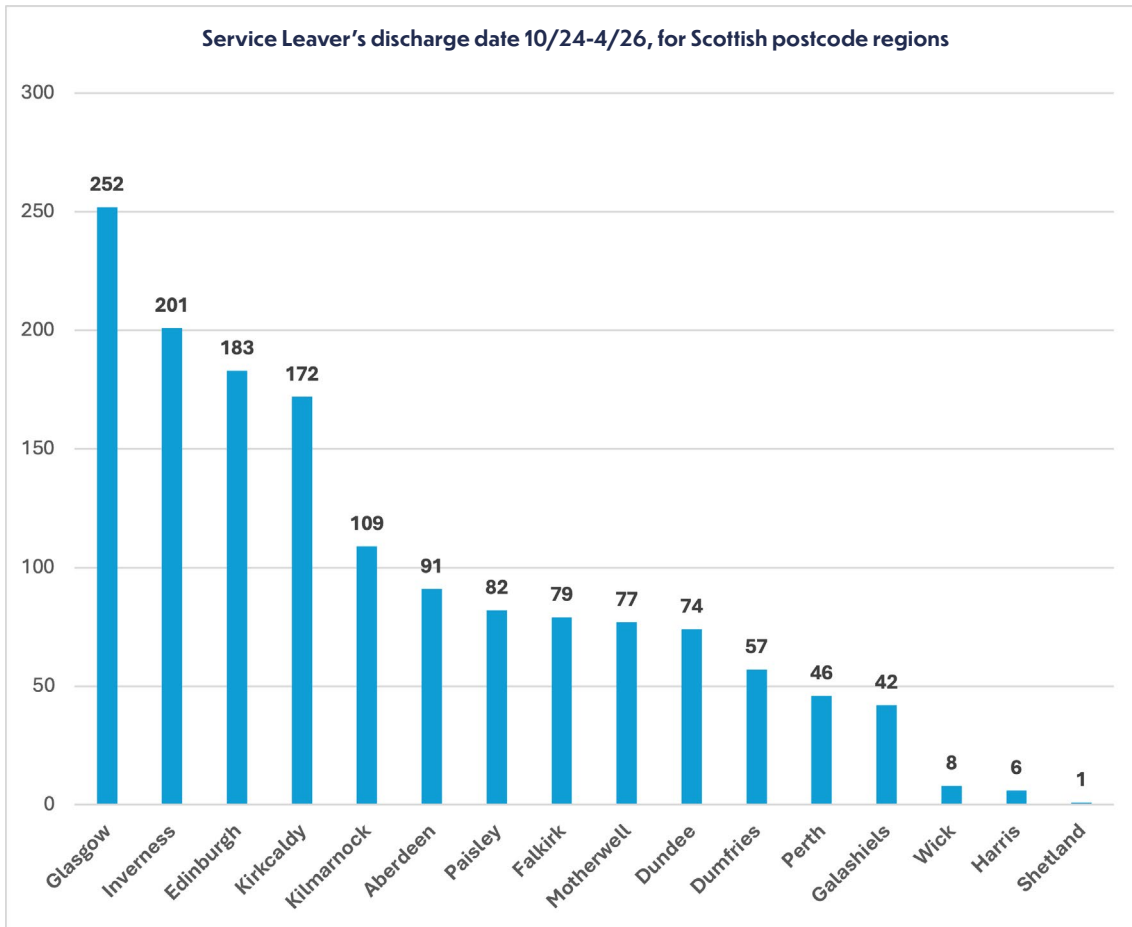
The most recent published statistics²⁹ confirm that in 2024/25 there were 14,588 Service leavers across the UK eligible to use the CTP service, with 10,208 of those choosing to access the support available. 86% of regular Service leavers who had used the CTP service and reported their outcomes after 6 months were in employment.

The maps at **Appendix 2** show the resettlement locations of Service leavers in Scotland between October 2024 and September 2025 who disclosed a post-discharge address to CTP.

Post discharge information provided by Service leavers suggests that the numbers of Service leavers settling in Scotland between October 2024 and April 2026 were 1,480. The majority (754) were from the Army. This is broken down in more geographic detail in the tables below.



29 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/698b15cd95285e721cd71275/Career_Transition_Partnership_annual_statistics_UK_Regular_Service_Personnel_Employment_Outcomes__2024-25.pdf



Management information provided by the MOD notes that since the new contract commenced in October 2024 there have been 1,338 referrals through the Regional Resettlement Centre in Rosyth, which covers the whole of Scotland. 1,126 of these were through the core resettlement programme, the others through more specialist support programmes.

50 Career Transition Workshops (CTW) have taken place with 419 Service leavers attending. Satisfaction rates for the events have been high. In the first year of the contract over 113 employers covering 46 industries participated in the programme, with 1,049 vacancies being made available to Service leavers. In Scotland, 84% of regular Service leavers who had used the CTP service and reported their outcomes after 6 months were in employment, 2% were in education and 2% had retired.

Forces Employment Charity also delivers ASCEND³⁰ on behalf of the UK Office for Veterans Affairs³¹. Funded through the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, this programme serves as an extension to CTP for veterans and their families across the UK by providing a free careers service and access to recruitment pathways.

The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) acknowledges employers that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant. The scheme recognises the different levels of commitment provided by employers; this is done through a 3-tier approach of bronze, silver, and gold awards. Those employers with a gold award are required to be an exemplar within their sector. They should be an advocate for a forces friendly workplace through their engagement with partner organisations, suppliers and customers.

This role is particularly influential, as businesses tend to respond more positively to insights from other successful organisations than to guidance from statutory bodies. There is already evidence of effective practice in this area, alongside clear opportunities to expand and strengthen these efforts. In particular, the informal networks that Gold Award employers naturally maintain – across supply chains, contractors, and partner organisations – offer valuable channels through which advocacy can be amplified and embedded more widely.

Third Sector Support

There are a number of third sector organisations that support Service leavers and veterans to gain training, qualifications and employment. It would not be possible to list them all. They do so in a variety of ways and often combined with other types of support.

30 www.forcesemployment.org.uk/programmes/op-ascend/

31 www.gov.uk/support-for-veterans/access-op-ascend

Veterans Scotland has a 'Support and Employment'³² group that brings together member organisations who provide practical support to veterans, including those seeking employment. This helps to encourage collaboration and the sharing of information and good practice, as well as providing a forum to identify priorities and challenges.

Officers Association Scotland (OAS)³³ is a good example of the type of support available to members of the veteran community. It supports officers and their families in many ways, including in the area of employment. It is worth noting that all training, networking sector insights, and employer events are open to all members of the military community, regardless of rank. A range of employment support is available, including training and learning events, bursaries, access to vacancies, networking and mentoring opportunities, and sectoral guides.

Through its new 5 year strategic plan, OAS remains firmly committed to providing personalised support for its clients. Ongoing developments in working practices have seen continual increases in registered clients and it is also seeing a consistent increase in the number of employers recognising military recruits are good for business. OAS has streamlined its provision, ensuring that more individuals can access support whilst also using its experience and credibility to share learning and improve provision at all levels.

OAS has continued to transform the way it works, with an enhanced training and support model which includes e-resources, monthly webinars, and a mixture of face to face and online training workshops to a growing audience. 2025 saw the launch of its podcast series '*Combat Boots to Business Suits*' which has garnered a considerable audience across the globe. 10 episodes convey a range of experiences including job hunting, how to start your own business and insights from an HR Director.

32 www.veteransscotland.org.uk/members/support.html

33 www.oascotland.org.uk

Activity in the last year has included:

- ▶ Hosting 6 face to face Employer events with approximately 946 attendees throughout the year, enabling multiple job opportunities for officers and non-commissioned officers.
- ▶ Participating in 15 external networking events across the UK promoting the value of employing officers.
- ▶ Hosting 26 monthly networking opportunities to support those transitioning or looking for a career change.
- ▶ Liaising directly with 233 employers to highlight the benefit of recruiting officers.
- ▶ Offering 4,224 Scottish employment opportunities through the jobs board.
- ▶ Delivering 56 webinars, training, and events to 2,779 clients in utilising CV and interview experience, how to find a job, cyber security, risk and resilience, humanitarian aid, and defence insights.
- ▶ Offering direct support to 9 spouses or partners to enhance their employment opportunities.

Another example is SSAFA, the Armed Forces Charity³⁴, who support individuals towards positive employment outcomes. SSAFA's Mentoring Service is its primary employment-focused service, while also providing broader transition support. The service provides practical help with job applications, CV writing, and interview preparation, alongside guidance to help individuals understand the differences between military and civilian employment, including variations in salary, culture, and job expectations. Volunteer mentors also provide signposting and referrals to specialist organisations and employment support services where appropriate.

More broadly, SSAFA recognises employment as both an outcome and a means of improving wider wellbeing, financial stability, and independence. SSAFA works in

34 www.ssafa.org.uk

partnership with other organisations across Scotland, recognising the importance of collaboration and coordination in the delivery of holistic and person-centred support.

SSAFA's Scottish Regional Office (SRO) and Branch Network provide welfare support through casework, enabling access to services through referrals and collaboration with other armed forces charities and statutory bodies across Scotland. Funding can be made available to remove barriers and make employment a realistic possibility in the future.

Those who engage with SSAFA Glasgow's Helping Heroes (GHH) tend not to be pre-employment ready at the point of referral or self-presentation. Individuals often present with significant unmet needs that must be addressed before employment can be a realistic or sustainable goal. Staff focus on developing the conditions required for employment readiness. This includes stabilising housing and income, resolving benefits issues, providing realistic information about in-work entitlements and transitions, addressing health and wellbeing needs, rebuilding confidence, and supporting individuals to explore employment at a pace they feel able to manage.

These are just a few examples of the kind of specific statutory and third sector support available to veterans and their spouses/partners. There are many more organisations who do this very effectively. Veterans can, of course, also access the range of mainstream pathways for training, skills and employment support that are available in Scotland.

STRENGTHS AND BENEFITS OF MILITARY SERVICE

The narrative around employing veterans is moving from a moral obligation to recognising veterans as an important national skills resource. Feedback from employers and other stakeholders has provided an insight into the opportunities and challenges in recruiting and retaining veterans. There has been definite and positive progress in the number of employers who recognise that veterans and their families make a valuable contribution to Scotland's economy and – as employees – can bring a breadth of skills, experience, and knowledge to an organisation.

In Scotland, a number of umbrella business membership organisations represent businesses collectively across sectors. They act as a voice for the business community – influencing policy, supporting members, and convening networks. These organisations include the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Confederation of British Industry Scotland and they function as intermediaries between business and government, combining advocacy, support, and convening power to improve economic conditions and help businesses succeed.

These types of structures could provide a way for considerations around veteran employment to be mainstreamed, ensuring the significant skills, qualifications and attributes that these individuals offer can be actively recruited and retained in support of economic growth. Attracting and retaining veterans could form part of capacity and capability planning, particularly in key sectors such as renewable energy, financial services and engineering. Currently, these opportunities are not being realised.

There is also scope for the UK and Scottish Government to work together to develop and communicate in this area more effectively. There is – for example –

limited awareness in Scotland of the National Insurance ‘holiday’ that is available across the UK. This is a scheme that allows employers to pay zero-rate secondary Class 1 National Insurance contributions on a qualifying veteran’s earnings for their first 12 consecutive months of civilian employment. This initiative would be particularly attractive to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), however it seems to be less well known by SMEs than by large organisations.

Excellence in business and employment is recognised and celebrated in Scotland, for example through categories at the Scottish Veterans Awards and at the Scottish Forces in Business Awards. These kinds of events not only celebrate success, but also reinforce confidence within the Armed Forces community. They can raise awareness among employers of the value veterans bring and encourage organisations to consider how their recruitment processes and development opportunities can be made more accessible for those transitioning from military service. The stories showcased are examples of success, but they are also sources of inspiration, demonstrating the talent, skill and determination that veterans bring to the business community every day.



Reserve Forces and Cadets Association

Members of the Reserve Forces provide employers with a unique opportunity to benefit from their unique skills and behaviours. Both Lowland and Highland Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA) have reported an increased enthusiasm from employers to create remuneration and benefits packages which support reservists to fulfil their service requirements both in training and deployment. Employers receive support from MOD for these packages and enhanced support is provided for SMEs, where having a staff member absent has

a greater impact. Reservists can, of course, also be veterans, bringing a wealth of experience and skills which are highly valued by both employers and colleagues.

Defence Relationship Managers (DRMs) work in each RFCA to encourage businesses to join the Employer Recognition Scheme and support award assessments. Highland RFCA offers an interactive map³⁵ which allows veterans to source veteran-friendly employers. It has also worked with umbrella organisations such as Offshore Energy UK to develop forums to encourage veterans, reservists and transitioning Service personnel to apply for skilled jobs. This has included webinars which have resulted in on the spot job offers to Service leavers. As well as industry specific groups, DRMs also liaise with Chambers of Commerce and Small Business Federations which is particularly useful to engage with SMEs. Some Chambers in Scotland are ERS Gold Award holders. Highland RFCA established the Chamber Force initiative which provides finance for forces-friendly employer events: Inverness, Fife and Dundee and Angus Chambers have held or are planning events.

The role played by some Local Authority Armed Forces and Veterans Champions in their engagement with employers, was also noted. In promoting the many benefits of employing veterans and supporting reservists, and in building strong links with employers, they can create relationships of trust which are invaluable in supporting successful transition from Service to civilian life.

It has been interesting to see that some forward-looking employers are beginning to engage with the cadet forces, recognising that whether they eventually become members of the armed forces or not, they develop valuable transferable skills such as self-management and confidence as a result of their cadet training. Arnold Clark is one such employer which has started holding employment open days for cadets.

35 www.hrfca.co.uk/interactive-map/

Employers' Perspective

An approach that is reaping dividends for both employers and veterans is to have some form of dedicated recruitment pathway that identifies Service leavers and veterans and provides some additional support such as CV 'translation' for hiring managers, buddy systems or mentoring and military employee resource groups. Previous SVC reports have highlighted this approach by Police Scotland and Barclays.



This non-exhaustive list of employers with bespoke veteran pathways demonstrates the wide variety of industries from aviation to waste management services, which actively recruit Service leavers: Airbus, Babcock, Balfour Beatty, Boeing, Atkins Realis, Avove Utilities, Bombardier Services UK, Boston Consulting Group, British Airways, Compass Group, FDM, Inzpire, John Deere, Leonardo UK, Lloyd's of London, M Group, M&C Saatchi World Services, MBDA, Mears Group, Microsoft, Morson Group, Mott Macdonald, Siemens Mobility, SP Energy Networks, Sunbelt Rentals. There are many more.

Many employers now recognise that Service leavers and veterans represent a significant pool of talent and have developed specific military recruitment pathways. This includes the Military programme at Galliford Try³⁶ which actively recruits through CTP as well as offering two week placements for those who want to experience what it is like to work at Galliford Try and what a career in construction could entail.

AECOM³⁷ actively recruits ex-Service personnel, including supporting reservists by providing generous leave to undertake duties and to support military charities. AECOM recognises that Service in the Armed Forces provides people with

36 <https://careers.gallifordtry.co.uk/military-programme/>

37 <https://aecom.com/careers/military-path/>

experiences and a skillset which are enormously valuable to businesses. It has seen recruits excel through the leadership, decision making and team building skills they have developed during their time in Service.

In 2025, SP Energy Networks launched its EMPower Network Programme³⁸, a 12-month paid trainee pathway designed to support ex-military personnel transitioning into the power industry. Recruitment was delivered through veteran networks, social media and open days. Ex-military employees played a key role in outreach, mentoring, and interviews. The programme includes a structured induction led by senior leaders, featuring accredited technical training and safety certification. Participants undertake tailored placements, supported by mentors and managers, with rotational experiences, training, and networking opportunities to build skills and integration, leading to potential permanent roles.

Sunbelt Rentals³⁹ actively recruits from the Armed Forces community through a structured pathway developed with its veteran network. A dedicated veterans careers page supports this approach by helping translate military experience into civilian roles. Candidates can match their military backgrounds to opportunities, while hiring managers are supported in recognising transferable skills. An expression of interest route guarantees veterans an interview with trained Veteran Ambassadors, who provide guidance and advocacy.

Based in Erskine, Scotland's Bravest Manufacturing Company⁴⁰ is a social enterprise and a market leader in the production of signs. Its mission is to enable veterans and others with disabilities to regain their independence through personal development involving employment and skills. It provides employment and delivers nationally recognised



38 www.scottishpower.com/people_careers/careers/pre_employment_programmes/ex_military_opportunities/empower_network_programme_energy_networks

39 www.sunbeltrentals.co.uk

40 <https://scotlandsbravest.org.uk>

training and qualifications with ongoing development opportunities for veterans, their families and others facing barriers to employment in Scotland. Since its launch in 2018 over 100 veterans have benefited from employment, volunteering, support or development opportunities and 80% of its current team are veterans, veteran family members or have a disability.

Engineering, management and development consultancy Mott MacDonald⁴¹ has established a dedicated Armed Forces Pathway, including a talent pool and ringfenced roles tailored to Service leavers, with a focus on skills and experience. Line managers are equipped to understand transition challenges and provide appropriate support. Applicants can self-identify to access tailored assistance, including mentoring, application review, and representation on interview panels. Onboarding includes access to buddy schemes and employee networks, supporting integration and engagement within the business.

41 www.mottmac.com/en-gb/

CASE STUDIES

The case studies below provide just a few examples of the many programmes and initiatives that are supporting veterans into employment.

From Military Musician to Kilt Maker



For over 140 years, the Forces Employment Charity (FEC) has supported the Armed Forces community to build successful lives beyond service. Through tailored, one-to-one guidance, training opportunities, and business support, they help veterans, Service leavers, reservists and their families.

The Charity's dedicated team of Military Women Employment Advisors empower female veterans and reservists to find sustainable careers that offer fulfilment, responding to research that has found that female veterans face more barriers to employment than males. One such beneficiary is Hannah.

Hannah lives in a remote part of Sutherland, which she calls "beautiful, but not always the easiest place to build a business". She started her career in 2010 by joining the RAF as a trombone player and performed around the world for more than ten years. Later, she moved to the Army to be closer to her family. In 2023, she left the service after a medical discharge due to a long-term back injury.

Moving to civilian life was not easy for Hannah. She dealt with a long maternity leave during COVID-19, high childcare costs, and the challenges of living in a rural area with limited support and services. "With two young children, childcare alone made returning to traditional employment difficult", she explains.

Hannah wanted to shape her own future, so she decided to learn kilt-making, even though she faced obstacles from the start. She was turned down for a military tailoring course because it wasn't open to women, so she taught herself. "I was told there wasn't really a place for a female tailor. So, I decided to learn anyway."

Her determination led her to start her own business, *Thistle and Cloth*⁴², where she blends traditional kilt-making with modern tartan design. Like many small business owners, especially women in rural areas, she found it hard to get funding, build networks, and grow her business. Hannah connected with the Forces Employment Charity through the Career Transition Partnership. Her Employment Advisor gave her dedicated support, including advice on funding, business development, and introductions to wider networks.

A major step for Hannah was winning a Heritage Crafts bursary. "It's not just the funding – it's the connections and visibility that come with it. That support gave me the confidence to grow."

42 www.thisleandcloth.com

In 2024, she was named Young Business of the Year by the Caithness Chamber of Commerce and had her designs at the Scottish Fashion Week. Since then, Hannah's business continues to grow, as has been working with and training others, helping to keep a traditional craft alive, and creating local job opportunities.



Aurora Energy Services, Military to Wind Pilot

Aurora Energy Services⁴³ is a multi-disciplinary services company, which delivers a wide range of services spanning the construction, maintenance, and decommissioning phases of all energy assets. The company brings together a range of specialist capabilities to support clients in delivering projects efficiently and safely. With a growing emphasis on the energy transition and addressing skills shortages, Aurora is committed to developing people and creating opportunities, reflected in its ethos of “people powered progress”.



From its Renewable Energy Training Centre in Inverness, Aurora has launched an innovative ‘Military to Wind’ pilot programme designed to support Service leavers into careers in the wind sector. The seven-week intensive course has been developed in-house to address both a recognised skills shortage in renewables and the challenge many veterans face when transitioning into civilian employment.

As a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant and a Bronze Award holder, Aurora already employs a number of ex-forces personnel and recognises the strong alignment between military experience and the needs of the energy sector. The programme was created to build on these transferable skills and provide a clear, structured pathway into employment.

Designed for Service leavers with a Level 3 engineering background, the programme equips participants with a comprehensive suite of industry-recognised certifications, including Global Wind Organisation (GWO) training and Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB) accredited competencies. A key differentiator is its focus on making participants ‘site ready’, combining technical training with mentoring, interview coaching, and direct access to employers.

43 www.auroraenergy.co/en-gb

Each delegate is guaranteed an interview with Aurora or partner organisations, helping to bridge the gap between training and employment. Over the 7 week programme, participants also engaged in at least 5 interviews with prospective employers, significantly increasing their exposure to the industry. Of the 3 participants in the pilot cohort, all have received job offers, demonstrating the programme's effectiveness in converting training into tangible outcomes.

Jason McLaughlin, a former Royal Engineer, is one such participant. After 21 years in the British Army, he transitioned into the programme following a varied military career spanning mechanical engineering, facilities management, and aerodrome consultancy. While confident in his skills and experience, Jason found breaking into the wind industry challenging, particularly as a new entrant without direct sector experience. "The biggest challenge was getting noticed," he explains. "The programme changed that by giving direct access to employers, alongside training and interview preparation."



Through the course, Jason gained industry-specific qualifications and a clearer understanding of how to present his military experience in a civilian context. This combination proved critical in securing a role as a trainee wind turbine technician.

He credits his military background with instilling adaptability, problem-solving, and a strong commitment to safety – qualities that have translated directly into his new career. "You don't always realise the value of what you bring, but with the right support, those skills can take you further than you expect."

Jason now defines success as building a long-term career in the wind sector, with ambitions to progress into a team leadership role.

Aurora's Military to Wind programme demonstrates how targeted training, combined with employer engagement and tailored support, can create meaningful employment pathways for Service leavers, while helping to meet the workforce demands of the UK's energy transition.



Families Programme, Forces Employment Charity

For over 140 years, the Forces Employment Charity (FEC) has helped the military community succeed beyond service – building careers, shaping futures, and living with purpose. They support Service leavers, veterans, reservists, and families with tailored career guidance, training, and job opportunities. Through NOVA, their justice service, they provide dedicated, trauma-informed support to veterans in contact with the justice system.



In 2025, they helped more than 23,000 individuals achieve meaningful employment and long-term stability, supporting members of the Armed Forces community not just into work, but towards sustainable and fulfilling careers.

One example is Anna Krajewski, a military spouse in Scotland who engaged with their Families Programme. Her story shows how personalised, compassionate support can make a real difference.



When Anna first came to Forces Employment Charity, she was juggling a lot. Her husband's Army career meant frequent moves, which made it tough to find stable work or maintain a support network. On top of that, Anna lives with autism, ADHD, depression, and a chronic knee problem, all of which limit her job options.

After several years out of work, Anna's confidence was low. She worried about her skills and whether anyone would want to hire her. "I hadn't worked for years and had bad experiences in the past. I was unsure if I was even employable." She also found CV writing, explaining employment gaps, and changing careers into administration especially tough.

Anna started working with Susanne, one of the FEC Employment Advisors.

Together, they made a simple plan with small, manageable steps. “She helped me break everything down into manageable tasks and understand what employers were really looking for”, Anna says. Susanne gave practical support with job applications and interviews and explained how to handle recruitment processes.

What mattered just as much was Susanne’s kindness and encouragement. “She communicated clearly and warmly, and I really felt she cared about me as a person, not just a client. It made a huge difference to my confidence”, Anna says. The regular check-ins helped Anna rebuild her self-belief. Training, including a Microsoft Office course, helped build her skills and unlock her aspirations for a future career. She also joined workshops and networking sessions, which made her feel less alone and more ready for work.

With Susanne’s support, Anna landed a Business Support Administrator job at The City of Edinburgh Council on her very first interview. She says the help she got from the Forces Employment Charity completely changed her confidence and outlook. “I wouldn’t have been able to do this without Susanne. I feel much more independent and hopeful about the future. But I also know I can come back for support whenever I need it, especially with the moves that come with military life.”

Thanks to the support of the Forces Employment Charity, Anna is now looking forward to career progression and continued support from the charity, helping her build a stable career that fits around military life.

Armed Forces Talent Programme, NHS Scotland

The Armed Forces Talent Programme⁴⁴ (AFTP), developed for NHS Scotland, is designed to support all members of the Armed Forces community into careers within the NHS workforce. This includes veterans and Service leavers as well as partners, spouses, dependants, and wider military families. By recognising the breadth of experience across the community, the programme takes an inclusive approach to strategic workforce development.



The initiative is rooted in the understanding that the Armed Forces community represents a significant and underutilised talent pool. Individuals connected to military life often possess highly transferable skills, including resilience, adaptability, and a strong focus on achieving outcomes. The programme creates an opportunity for these individuals to continue contributing to public service while supporting NHS Scotland in addressing workforce challenges.

The programme focuses on preparing individuals for success rather than acting solely as a recruitment pipeline. It provides information about the wide range of roles available within the NHS, offers guidance on navigating recruitment processes, and supports candidates in strengthening applications. In addition, it delivers direct entry initiatives such as paid placements and 'look at life' experiences, enabling individuals to gain insight into NHS working environments before applying.

In place since 2022, the programme operates across all areas of NHS Scotland and includes engagement with hiring managers to improve understanding of the Armed Forces community and its potential contribution. A defining feature of the programme is its tailored approach. Individuals who register their interest provide information that allows support to be aligned with their personal circumstances,

44 www.careers.nhs.scot/shape-your-future/armed-forces-talent-programme/

skills, and career aspirations. While still developing, the ambition is to enhance this personalised support further.

Support is delivered through webinars, application workshops, and interactive sessions, alongside opportunities for direct engagement with programme staff and subject matter experts. Collaboration with partner organisations plays a key role in promoting the programme and connecting individuals with relevant opportunities.

Initial outcomes have been positive. Participants from paid placement initiatives have moved into longer-term roles, and there has been an increase in successful applications from the Armed Forces community. Additionally, hiring managers report improved awareness of transferable skills and better alignment between candidates and roles.

A key lesson from the programme is the importance of precision. Individuals within the Armed Forces community have diverse experiences and aspirations, and tailored support is more effective than generic approaches. The programme continues to evolve through evaluation, feedback, and collaboration, with a focus on strengthening what works and refining areas for improvement. Meaningful and sustained investment in tailored pathways delivers far greater impact than superficial efforts, benefiting both individuals and the organisation.

Jason Bruce, who is now a Project Support Officer with Public Services Delivery Scotland, was drawn to the role because he felt that the values of the NHS closely mirrored his own and that AFTP offered a supported pathway that recognised both his experience and potential. Jason had joined the Army at 16 and served for 23 years, working across a wide range of roles. His decision to leave after more than 2 decades of service was not planned but was the result of being medically discharged. He notes that “While this was a challenging



and unexpected transition point, it also gave me the opportunity to reflect on how I could continue to serve in a meaningful way outside of uniform. Although my military career ended earlier than I would have anticipated, my commitment to service, teamwork, and making a positive difference remained unchanged”.

Jason was surprised by the pace and ambiguity of his new workplace. He notes: “In the military, processes and responsibilities are usually very clear. In civilian environments, decision making can be slower and more consensus driven, which took some adapting to, but it also encouraged me to develop my influencing and communication skills.” He adds that he found peer support to be invaluable, and conversations with other veterans who had already transitioned helped normalise the challenges.

Jason is clear that the skills and experience he gained in Service have been valuable. “Organisation, discipline, teamwork, and the ability to remain calm under pressure have been directly transferable,” he explains, adding: “I’m also comfortable taking ownership, managing competing priorities, and supporting senior leaders. All skills developed through military Service and my civilian experience in senior management positions.”

Looking back, Jason wishes he had known that feeling uncertain is normal and that progress doesn’t have to be immediate. He says, “Transition is a process, not an event, and it’s okay to take time to find the right fit”. He is looking forward to continuing to grow professionally while maintaining balance in his personal life.

Atlas NextWave & Forces Employment Charity



Forces Employment Charity work with a wide range of employers to support recruitment from the Armed Forces community – including veterans, Service leavers, reservists, and, where applicable, military family members. These employers recognise the value of engaging with military talent. One such employer is Atlas NextWave⁴⁵, a global provider of workforce solutions across the energy, marine, and renewables sectors. They currently hold a bronze level award under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme and are working towards silver level.

45 www.atlasnextwave.com

Atlas NextWave support clients worldwide by delivering skilled talent for complex, safety-critical environments. Their engagement with the Armed Forces community developed organically, as they began to see a growing number of applications from Service leavers. It quickly became clear to them that this talent pool brings highly transferable skills, from discipline and leadership to operating effectively in demanding conditions. Recognising this strong alignment with the needs of the energy sector, they have – since 2024 – taken a more structured approach through their involvement with the Armed Forces Covenant and the Career Transition Partnership.

They note that “One of the key advantages is operational reliability. Veterans are accustomed to working in high-risk, safety-critical environments where procedures, discipline, and accountability are non-negotiable. This translates directly to offshore and energy operations, where consistency, compliance, and attention to detail are essential to maintaining safety and ensuring projects run efficiently”. They have seen that veterans bring a combination of mindset, skills and experience that align extremely well with the demands of energy sector work.

Atlas NextWave are clear that engaging with the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) and the Forces Employment Charity (FEC) has significantly strengthened their approach to attracting, recruiting, and developing talent from the Armed Forces community. They say that “Their support has been particularly valuable in translating military experience into industry-relevant capabilities, helping both candidates and our internal teams better understand how military roles align with offshore and energy sector positions. This has improved the quality of matches, reduced friction in the recruitment process, and enabled us to build a more effective and scalable pathway for military talent”.

Since engaging with CTP and FEC, they have implemented several targeted initiatives to support the recruitment of veterans and have actively participated in CTP events across key locations in the UK since 2024, enabling them to connect with local talent and support their clients’ project demands with regionally relevant candidates. They say that “implementation of a structured military pathway has

enabled us to move from one-off recruitment activity to building long-term, sustainable relationships with military talent. Through our ongoing engagement with CTP and FEC, we have developed a more consistent pipeline of candidates and a clearer framework for how we attract, assess, and support veterans into the energy sector". They add "This has not only improved the quality and continuity of talent available to our clients, but also allowed us to continuously refine our approach, embedding best practice and continuously strengthening our capability as a long-term partner for both clients and military talent".

Atlas NextWave would strongly encourage organisations to engage with CTP and FEC, and to actively consider the employment of veterans. They know that the Armed Forces community represents a highly skilled, disciplined, and adaptable talent pool that can add immediate value, particularly in industries where safety, teamwork, and operational excellence are critical. With the right support and understanding of how military experience translates into civilian roles, they are sure that organisations can unlock significant long-term benefits for both their business and their workforce.

In terms of the future they say that "Becoming an Armed Forces-friendly employer is not a one-off achievement, it is an ongoing commitment. Our next phase is focused on building a more structured and scalable approach, strengthening our military talent pathway, and embedding this more consistently across our business. We aim to deepen our partnerships, expand our engagement with Service leavers, and continue refining how we translate military experience into long-term career opportunities within the energy sector, creating long-term value for both our clients and the individuals we support".

BAE Systems

BAE Systems⁴⁶ is a leading UK defence company delivering advanced technology across air, land, maritime and cyber domains.

Since 2022 Murray McLeod-Jones MBE, a former Parachute Regiment officer with 30 years' service, has been employed by BAE Systems as Head of Veterans and Reservists Recruitment. His role was established to formalise and expand what had previously been a small but steady intake of veterans. Murray explained that "The focus has been on raising internal awareness, improving external visibility, and supporting better translation of military experience into civilian roles, while recruitment delivery is managed by an external contractor. BAE's organisational structure, with multiple sites and functions broadly analogous to the maritime, land, air and digital domains, enables the company to direct veterans into a wide range of roles aligned to their skills and preferences".



The strategy developed in 2022 remains in place, supported by engagement with organisations such as the Career Transition Partnership and a military recruitment company contracted by BAE, and participation in military employment events and commemorative activities.

Murray continued: "We work with external partners to support candidates through transition, including signposting through specialist organisations. Our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant means that we want to make sure veteran candidates are not disadvantaged when they apply and that's why our recruitment managers are alerted whenever veteran applicants progress. This means that we can provide additional support if needed for those struggling to pass initial screening, including advice on CVs and articulation of skills. Once recruited,

46 www.baesystems.com/en

veterans are supported through mentoring and buddying arrangements, and ForcesNet, an employee support group, reinforcing integration and development.”

BAE Systems is also exploring support for spouses, partners and children of service personnel, recognising the wider family impact of service life. This includes ongoing policy development and potential pilot programmes aimed at improving access to employment through tailored roles, flexible working and targeted training. There is an emphasis on identifying potential, supporting transitions into less directly aligned roles, and improving translation of skills through better conversations and emerging tools, including AI.



BAE Systems reports strong retention outcomes, with veterans demonstrating high levels of loyalty and internal progression, contributing positively to business performance. Across its UK operations, BAE Systems employs over 2,640 veterans and reservists, including approximately 1,370 hires since 2022. On average the company is now recruiting one veteran a day. The model has generated increasing demand and is now evolving to focus on scaling, skills development and ensuring good role fit. The company also promotes wider engagement through its Gold Award status in the Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme, supporting other businesses, including SMEs, to improve understanding of veteran employment and available incentives.

REFLECTIONS

This review indicates that there has been clear and sustained progress in supporting veterans into employment both UK wide and in Scotland. There is now stronger collaboration across government, employers and the third sector, alongside a more confident and mature understanding of veterans as a strategic economic asset.

Initiatives such as the Skills Discovery Tool, NHS Scotland's Armed Forces Talent Programme, and targeted sector initiatives show that when support is aligned with employer demand, strong and positive outcomes follow. Veterans consistently bring a powerful combination of technical ability, adaptability, leadership and resilience, delivering measurable value across a wide range of sectors.

Encouragingly, employment outcomes for many veterans are strong, with high proportions entering work within relatively short periods following transition. This reflects both the quality of the workforce and the effectiveness of current support structures. However, the next phase of progress lies not only in securing employment, but in ensuring that veterans are able to thrive in roles that fully utilise their skills and experience. Evidence of underemployment suggests that this is an area where further gains can be made, unlocking additional productivity and economic benefit without increasing labour supply.

A key opportunity is to bridge the remaining gap between employer awareness and employer action. Employers increasingly recognise the value of veterans, but there is scope to translate this into more systematic and proactive hiring, development and retention strategies. Embedding veteran recruitment within mainstream workforce planning – particularly in sectors facing skills shortages – would allow businesses to make fuller use of this talent pool. Strengthening engagement through business representative organisations offers a practical route to scaling this approach.

For policymakers, the foundations of a supportive system are already in place, but there is an opportunity to build on this by strengthening coordination, data, and communication. More robust and consistent data collection – including longitudinal tracking – would enable a deeper understanding of outcomes, particularly in relation to career progression, underemployment, and entrepreneurship. At the same time, policy should continue to reflect and reinforce the Armed Forces Covenant principle of ‘no disadvantage’, ensuring that Service leavers, spouses and partners, and bereaved families are supported equitably in the labour market.

There is also a clear opportunity to enhance how strategy and policy engage with employers. Treating employers as key partners – or ‘customers’ – within the system means making it easier to access support, improving awareness of incentives, and clearly articulating the business case for hiring veterans. While valuable schemes are in place, their impact will be maximised through more consistent and targeted communication. There is also the risk of ‘employer fatigue’ because of numerous organisations making approaches to employers to encourage the employment of veterans. Strategic oversight and careful coordination would mitigate this risk.

For veterans themselves, the evidence highlights the importance of early and proactive transition planning. Those who engage fully with available support, begin preparation early, and invest time in understanding how to translate their skills and experience tend to achieve better outcomes. Enhancing Life Skills provision, particularly by reinforcing understanding of skills, and practical application of career management, would further support this process. Importantly, transition is best understood as a journey rather than a single event, and continued engagement over time should be encouraged.

The system rightly recognises that a one-size-fits-all approach is neither appropriate nor effective. Tailored, person-centred support remains essential, particularly for those facing more complex challenges. The work of third sector organisations demonstrates how addressing housing, health, and financial stability can create the conditions for sustainable employment success. This holistic

approach is a clear strength of the current system and will become increasingly vital as cost-of-living challenges and housing shortages continue to worsen.

Specific cohorts also present opportunities for further progress. Spouses and partners represent a capable and flexible workforce, and there is scope to better support their access to sustainable careers, including through entrepreneurship and portable employment models. Older veterans seeking work may benefit from more targeted approaches that recognise their experience while addressing potential barriers in the labour market.

There is significant potential to integrate veteran employment more fully into Scotland's broader economic and workforce strategies. Veterans are already contributing strongly to key sectors such as infrastructure, energy and public services. With a more coordinated and forward-looking approach, their skills can be even more closely aligned with future economic priorities, including the transition to net zero.

Overall, while Scotland has built a strong foundation, significant work remains to ensure that the full value of veteran skills is realised through sustainable, high-quality civilian careers. Maintaining progress will depend on translating positive intent into consistent practice, strengthening system leadership and data, and ensuring that all parts of the veteran community are able to benefit from the opportunities available.

CONCLUSIONS

Veterans benefit from early transition planning, supported by strengthened Life Skills provision and clear pathways into employment. While there have been improvements in the support provided during transition to assist with post-Service employment, more needs to be done. Tailored support should continue to prioritise those with additional needs, Early Service Leavers, non UK veterans and older veterans seeking work. Better data gathering and analysis over longer time periods will help to achieve these improvements.

Employment outcomes for veterans in Scotland overall appear to be more positive, with further gains available by addressing underemployment and fully utilising veteran skills. Policymakers should strengthen data collection and long-term tracking to better understand outcomes and drive continuous improvement.

Veteran employment should be embedded within Scotland's mainstream economic and workforce planning to maximise its long-term impact. Strategic oversight of policy for veterans' employment, skills and learning should be strengthened and led by the Scottish Government.

The Armed Forces Covenant principle of removing disadvantage should remain central to all employment policy and practice, including for spouses and the bereaved community. Clear guidance must be provided by the MOD when the Covenant due regard duty is extended to employment.

Employers are increasingly aware that veterans form a highly capable and valued workforce, making a strong and growing contribution to Scotland's economy. They have an opportunity to build on this by proactively recruiting, developing and retaining veteran talent.

Good practice is already in place through efforts to engage and support employers, helping to increase awareness and uptake of existing schemes and

incentives. Employers holding the Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award should be more fully utilised as a valuable resource, acting as peer advocates to promote veteran employment across the business community.

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APPENDIX 1

The table below – summarised from the sources listed – sets out some of the shared themes which can impact on gaining and retaining employment after service.

Factor	Impact on Gaining Employment	Impact on Retaining Employment
Transition from Service to Civilian Life	Disrupted or unplanned transition reduces readiness for civilian recruitment; weaker job search capability	Difficulty adapting to civilian workplace norms; early job exits
Skills Translation & Recognition	Military experience poorly understood by employers; veterans enter work below skill level	Underemployment leads to dissatisfaction, disengagement, and turnover
Confidence	Veterans undersell or mis present skills in applications and interviews	Reduced confidence affects progression, performance reviews, and retention
Health & Wellbeing	Health conditions limit job choice or delay labour market entry	Fluctuating health impacts attendance, performance, and job sustainability
Employer Awareness & Workplace Culture	Stereotypes or lack of understanding deter recruitment	Poor line management and inflexibility increase attrition
Caring Responsibilities & Life Circumstances	Reduced availability for full time or shift work; constrained sector choice	Inflexible roles become unsustainable over time
Access to Employment Support	Veterans unaware of support or disengage from services that feel inaccessible	Time limited support fails to address later employment challenges
Job Quality & Security	Entry into insecure or short term work under financial pressure	High churn, instability, and limited progression
Networks	Limited civilian networks reduce access to informal job opportunities	Lack of workplace advocates affects progression and retention
Geography & Mobility	Restricted job markets due to housing, family, or health needs	Long commutes or relocation pressures reduce job longevity

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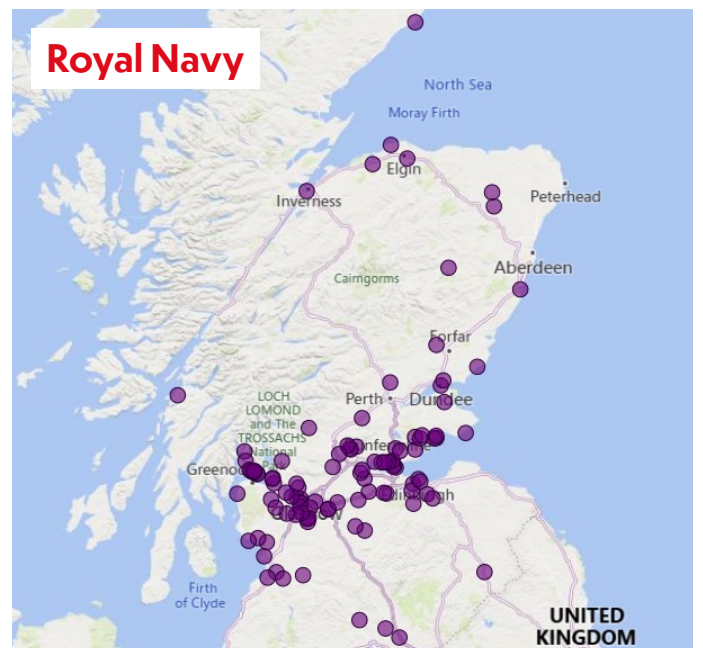
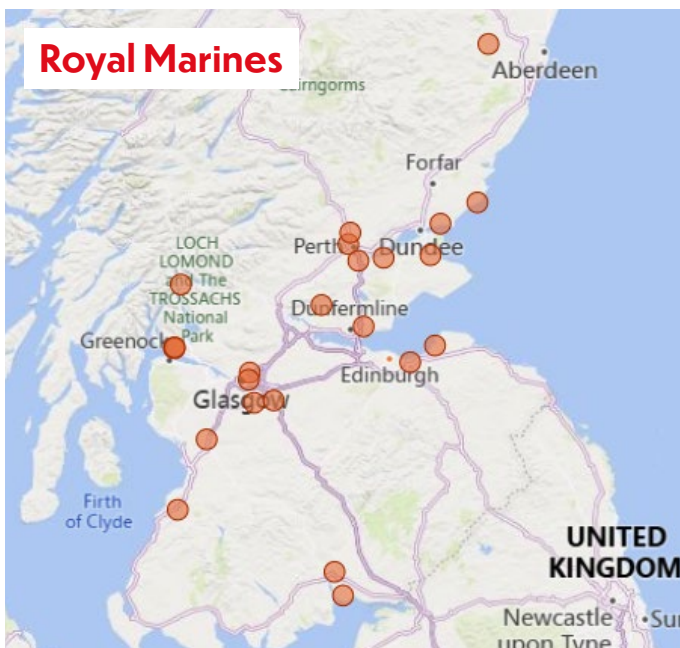
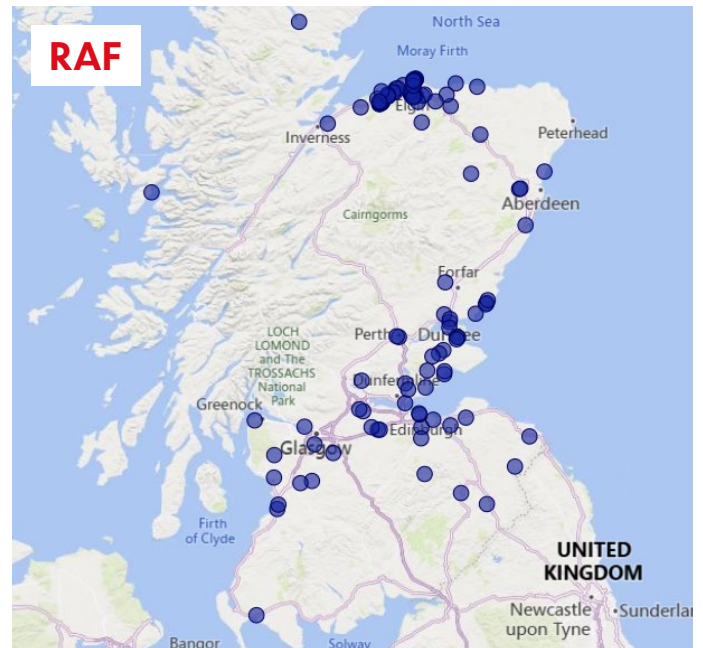
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APPENDIX 2

The maps below, provided by the Career Transition Partnership, show the resettlement locations of Service leavers in Scotland who disclosed a post-discharge address between October 2024 and September 2025.



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