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# PATHFINDER



OVER 30 YEARS OF SUPPORTING THE UK ARMED FORCES

## THE DEFENCE EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

WHY IT  
MATTERS  
FOR SERVICE  
LEAVERS,  
EMPLOYERS,  
AND THE  
NATION





# READY FOR CIVVY STREET?

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into civvy life?  
Not everyone's  
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SCAN ME

# AWARD TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE FROM MILITARY FAMILIES

**The Forces Employment Charity has been awarded £25,000 by the Armed Forces Education Trust to expand its dedicated employment support for young people from military families in the UK.**

Last year, with the help of an initial grant from the Trust, the Forces Employment Charity was able to help 756 Service children and young people, aged 16-24, by delivering life skills, education, training, and employment support.

Children and young people growing up in Armed Forces households can face unique challenges, such as frequent relocation, separation from parents, disrupted education, and lower participation in higher education compared to their civilian peers.

The additional funding from the Trust

will enable the Forces Employment Charity to provide tailored one-to-one mentoring, employability workshops, access to work experience placements, and guidance with education and career pathways. Advisors, many of whom are military spouses, bring lived experience and a deep understanding of the pressures that Service life can place on young people.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Armed Forces Education Trust, Charmian Hickman, said:

"The Trust is proud to be supporting Forces Employment Charity for a second year. We recognise that many Service children and young people may face additional challenges when deciding what to do after school. We are delighted to see the Young People's team helping to broaden their horizons and give them the

confidence to explore new opportunities." James Murphy, Director of Veterans and Families at the Forces Employment Charity, said:

**"Young people are the driving force behind the UK's future prosperity. Their energy, creativity, and adaptability are essential in a rapidly changing world."**

"This generous £25,000 grant from the Armed Forces Education Trust gives us the means to provide personal, trusted support to young people from military families. We empower them to overcome challenges, build confidence, and seize opportunities.

"Young people are the driving force behind the UK's future prosperity. Their energy, creativity, and adaptability are essential in a rapidly changing world. Investing in their development is essential for our economy. When we empower young people to thrive, we strengthen our workforce, spark innovation, and secure long-term growth for the nation."



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## SCOTTISH VETERANS COMMISSIONER: PROGRESS REPORT

**The Scottish Veterans Commissioner has published her independent assessment of progress towards delivery of recommendations made to Scottish Ministers.**

The assessment process, established in 2019, provides independent scrutiny of the work of the Scottish Government and helps drive improvement, with the aim of making things better for Scotland's veterans and their families.

This is the fourth assessment made by the current Veterans Commissioner, Lt Cdr (retd.) Susie Hamilton RN. Overall, the report shows that progress towards delivery continues. This year's assessment highlights clear evidence of progress. For the first time, no recommendations have been rated as red (not implemented).

This indicates that work is underway across almost all areas under review, with activity now covering a wider range of policies and services than in previous years. It is also encouraging to see a number of actions now embedded as business as usual. While this is welcome, the Commissioner remains focused on ensuring that progress leads to meaningful outcomes for veterans and their families, rather than activity alone.

See full details of the Progress Report at [scottishveteranscommissioner.org](http://scottishveteranscommissioner.org)

**If you would like any further details of this or any other aspect of the Commissioner's work, please email the office at [scottishveteranscommissioner@gov.scot](mailto:scottishveteranscommissioner@gov.scot)**





THE ORIGINAL  
RESETTLEMENT  
MAGAZINE

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# SHOWCASING BEREAVEMENT RESEARCH ON INTERNATIONAL STAGE

**The annual CIMVHR Forum brings together international thought leaders to share knowledge, collaborate, and showcase research that enhances the health and wellbeing of military personnel, Veterans, public safety personnel and their families.**

At this year's Forum, Dr Faye Acton, from Anglia Ruskin University's Veterans and Families Institute for Military Social Research (VFI), will present on an ongoing research project with Scotty's Little Soldiers. The study explores how being part of a military-specific charity shapes a bereaved child or young person's sense of identity and belonging – and highlights the vital role that tailored bereavement support plays in helping them feel understood, less isolated, and better

able to thrive.

Scotty's Founder Nikki Scott will attend the Forum alongside four members of Scotty's Council – a group of Scotty's beneficiaries who provide insight, ideas and help guide the direction of the charity. Together, Nikki and the young adults will ensure that the voices of bereaved military young people are represented at this important international event.

Nikki Scott said: "We're proud that the voices of our bereaved military children will be heard at CIMVHR Forum 2025, and that Scotty's work is part of this important international conversation. By sharing our experiences and research, we hope to influence how bereaved military children

and young people are supported not just in the UK, but across the world. We are also grateful for the opportunity to learn about what's happening in other countries to support bereaved military families."

“

**We're proud that the voices of our bereaved military children will be heard at CIMVHR Forum 2025, and that Scotty's work is part of this conversation."**

For more about CIMVHR Forum 2025 head to [cimvhrforum.ca](http://cimvhrforum.ca) This work forms part of Scotty's STRIDES Programme, which supports the education and development of bereaved military children and young people. The STRIDES Programme is principally funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund

Trust and the Lloyd's Patriotic Fund, and Scotty's would like to thank them for their generous support in making this possible.

## Scottish Veterans Commissioner: Progress Report

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## First Ever Independent Armed Forces Champion Gets 'Royal Seal'

**A new independent champion for the Armed Forces has come into law, delivering on a key Government manifesto commitment to improve service life.**

His Majesty the King has given the 'royal seal' for the appointment of the first ever independent champion to support the Armed Forces and their families.

A recruitment campaign is ongoing to appoint the Commissioner. They will be a direct point of contact for personnel and their families, and have unprecedented powers to investigate welfare issues and raise concerns that impact service life, including equipment, housing, and unacceptable behaviours.

Appointing an Armed Forces Commissioner was a lead defence manifesto commitment by this Government to renew the nation's contract with those who serve.

Minister for the Armed Forces Luke Pollard MP said:

"This Government is renewing the nation's contract with those who serve and the Armed Forces Commissioner is a critical step forward in how we are improving Service life. This builds on the largest pay rise for our forces in 20 years; and the commitment of an additional £1.5 billion to fixing military houses.

"With the first-ever Commissioner now being established into law, this independent champion will elevate the experiences of our brave personnel and drive forward critical improvements for them and their families."

Once appointed, the Armed Forces Commissioner will be able to visit UK Defence sites unannounced, commission reports, and report directly to Parliament to hold the Government to account.

Personnel and their families will be able to contact the Commissioner about issues affecting them, with the Commissioner empowered to investigate these concerns, seek relevant information from the Ministry of Defence, and make recommendations for improvement.

The appointment builds on this Government's commitment to improve all aspects of service life, including an inflation busting pay award this year, on top of last year's biggest pay rise in 20 years.

The commitment to invest an extra £1.5bn to improve service housing in the SDR means this Government will spend more than £7bn on military accommodation across this Parliament.

The move to appoint a Commissioner has been inspired and modelled on the Commissioner for the Armed Forces in Germany, who has been received positively by German personnel.



# MISSION ACCOMPLISHED! RACE ACROSS THE UK

**Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) celebrated the successful completion of its 2025 flagship challenge, Race Across the UK, which saw participants go the distance - both literally and figuratively - in support of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines community.**

Spanning four intense days, from 2 to 5 September, twenty-four teams raced from the Scott Monument in Edinburgh to the Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth using only traditional navigation methods, grit, and sheer determination. No GPS. No shortcuts. Just courage, collaboration, and the will to make a difference.

Headlined by Babcock International, the event proved to be far more than a physical test. It captured the imagination of serving personnel, civilians, veterans, and supporters, all united in raising vital funds for RNRMC to ensure our sailors, marines, and their families are valued and supported, for life.

An unforgettable closing ceremony was held at the Guildhall in Dartmouth, with five awards presented to recognise the achievements of the teams:

### The Trailblazer Award

Team Sea Dust blazed ahead to cross the finish line with the fastest time — an impressive 37 hours and 55 minutes! They also raised over £10,000 for charity, a truly incredible achievement.

### Smart Spender

Team Lewis took home this award by managing their £500 budget with precision, finishing the race with £154.90 remaining. A masterclass in money management!

### The Challenge Champion

In a show of all-round excellence in endurance and teamwork, Ship Happens were crowned challenge champions, after competing head-to-head with team Winging It!

### Team Spirit

Not the Tactical Twins earned this award through peer nominations. From helping teams along the route to opening their home to a stranded team, their generosity and kindness perfectly captured the spirit of the change.

### The Creative Commute Award

Hats off to team Winging It, who brought their journey to life in the most creative way. They came prepared with e-bikes, used trains, buses and boats, and ended the race by kayaking down the River Dart!

This year's Race Across the UK has raised an outstanding £80 000 so far, with donations still coming in. Whether following along on social media, cheering teams at checkpoints, or making a donation — supporters from across the UK helped make this challenge a triumph. Samantha Nicolson MBE, Interim CEO of RNRMC, reflected on the event's success:

"Race Across the UK has been nothing short of extraordinary. I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations to every team who took part - your determination, ingenuity, and camaraderie were truly inspiring. You've not only completed a formidable physical challenge, but you've also helped raise vital funds that will change lives across our Naval community."

Thanks to Babcock International for their unwavering support as headline sponsor along with supporting partners, BAE Systems, Totaljobs and ESS for helping us bring this flagship challenge to life. Their commitment to the wellbeing of our naval families has made a lasting impact.

## 13 BRIDGES CHALLENGE... IN GERMANY

**When SSAFA Germany branch volunteers were unable to make it back to the UK for this year's 13 Bridges Challenge, they refused to let distance get in the way of supporting the Armed Forces community.**

Instead, they laced up their Altberrgs and created their own challenge, one that took them across 13 bridges in the scenic regions of Nordrhein-Westfalen and Bavaria.

Branch Treasurer Sylvia Lane organised a 15-kilometre walk around the Lippesee area of Paderborn, plotting a route that crossed 13 bridges.

Sylvia commented: "It was a lovely walk on a lovely summer day. And I even had a few locals eyeing up my SSAFA t-shirt."

Meanwhile, in Munich, volunteers Sharon Kelly and her husband Mark, both caseworkers for SSAFA, completed their own version of the challenge.

Sharon said: "The route took us along the beautiful Isar River, past the Friedensengel (Angel of Peace golden statue), the Alpine Museum and even the famous spires of the Frauenkirche in the city centre. The bridges were both architectural and scenic highlights and there was plenty of street art along the

way and our matching SSAFA shirts got plenty of attention — great publicity for a great cause."

Chair Paul Janes added: "It was fantastic to see our volunteers show such creativity and commitment. Whether in London, Lippesee or Munich, the spirit of the 13 Bridges Challenge truly brought our SSAFA community together."

The local version of the 13 Bridges Challenge highlighted SSAFA's presence in Germany, bringing people together and sparking conversations about an even bigger, more inclusive event next year.

Volunteers hosted their Annual General Meeting in Paderborn, reflecting on the past year's achievements and making plans for the future. The team praised the hard work of its caseworkers and volunteers and discussed ways to expand SSAFA's reach across Germany.

Later in the season, SSAFA Germany took part in the Sennelager Garrison Summer Fete at Normandy Barracks.

Paul said: "The day was well attended with around 600 people from the service community and local area. There was something for everyone — the coconut shy and welly-wanging were especially popular. SSAFA was proud to be there, flying the flag and having fun with families."



## JOBS NEWS: DEFENCE SPENDING GROWS BY 6%

**Working people will feel safer and see the economic benefits of record investment in defence, new figures reveal.**

In a powerful boost to the UK economy, the figures, which cover the 2024/25 financial year, show a 6% rise in real terms expenditure bringing the total to £31.7 billion. In an increasingly unstable and volatile world, this includes a 21% uplift to investment in the Weapons and Ammunition sector after inflation, so the UK is resilient and responsive to any challenge.

The figures show how the Government is making defence an engine for growth, with increased investment creating jobs and

opportunities in communities across the country to raise living standards and put more money in working people's pockets.

The figures show an exceptional increase from the previous year, representing the highest level of defence investment in UK industry for over a decade. This substantial investment translates to £460 for every person living in the UK, up from £440 the previous year.

The benefits will be felt across the UK, with Yorkshire and Humber seeing the biggest percentage rise in spend, increasing by 30%, with London (18%) and the North West (15%) also seeing big increases.

Defence Secretary John Healey said: "This record investment shows how we are making defence an engine

for growth, supporting jobs and prosperity for British working people and boosting businesses across the United Kingdom.

"These new figures show how the defence dividend from our record investment is benefitting working people across the UK. It follows the launch of our Defence Industrial Strategy this week, which will provide the resilient industrial base that we need for the future."

This record spending directly supports the Government's Defence Industrial Strategy, launched this week, which focuses on enabling the building of a resilient supply chain and supporting innovation across the defence sector.

Small and medium-sized enterprises continue to benefit from defence

investment, with direct defence spending supporting innovation and growth in businesses across the UK. This reflects the Defence Industrial Strategy's commitment to diversifying the supply chain and ensuring smaller companies can contribute to Britain's defence capabilities whilst driving local economic growth.

Much of the Ministry of Defence's global expenditure remains anchored in the UK, ensuring that taxpayers' investment in defence translates directly into British jobs, skills, and economic growth. This includes both direct payments to UK industry and indirect spending through international agreements where work subsequently takes place in Britain.





Giles O'Halloran explains how taking the time to research, ask the right questions, and connect with other veterans, can help you confidently identify employers that are genuinely good to work for...

# PICKING THE RIGHT PROSPECTS



## About The Author

Giles O'Halloran is an experienced Recruitment, Talent and HR consultant who works as a freelancer supporting professionals and organisations with career transition services and talent solutions. He has worked for a number of large and respected organisations, including blue chip and global recruitment companies. Giles has spent over 15 years providing CV writing, LinkedIn profile writing, interview preparation and professional networking support to clients in both the public and private sector. He also has over a decade of service in two branches of the Reserve Forces. Feel free to connect with Giles via LinkedIn, follow him on Twitter via @GilesOHalloran or @go2\_work or take a look at his website [www.go2-work.co.uk](http://www.go2-work.co.uk)

### Transitioning from the UK Armed Forces to civilian employment is a significant life change.

While military service equips individuals with skills such as leadership, discipline, and problem-solving, identifying a civilian employer that values and understands these qualities can be challenging.

Knowing how to evaluate whether a potential employer is right for you is essential for long-term career success and wider career fulfilment.

This article provides a structured guide for Service leavers and veterans to assess potential employers across several key areas.

#### Research their Defence support credentials

Many employers in the UK actively support the Armed Forces community. So before applying, investigate the company's involvement with initiatives that support service leavers and veterans. Check for things like the Armed Forces Covenant, whether they have a Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Award,



#### Assess career development opportunities

Service personnel often have clear career progression pathways, but this is not always the way with civilian employers. Ideally, a good civilian employer should also offer opportunities for growth and development so that you can then craft a successful second career. Things to look for either through your research, questions, or even interview can be: whether there is a structured

induction and onboarding process for new starters; what training and development is made available; whether they support professional development or sponsor professional qualifications and membership; and what internal promotion opportunities exist once you join.

It is always worth asking at interview or through the selection process about typical career progression and career development opportunities.

or specific Veteran recruitment and development opportunities. They may even partner with key charitable organisations like Walking With The Wounded or Blind Veterans.

You can check the status of supportive employers via the Armed Forces Covenant and ERS websites, but those actively engaging with veteran support or military charities are a definite first port of call.

#### Evaluate the cultural fit for you

Coming from a strong culture of service, structure, and camaraderie, many ex-Forces personnel thrive in environments with clear values and strong teamwork. It is therefore worth looking into employers who can match that in terms of their mission, values, and any

supporting media or testimonials. Evidencing that in what they share will be key but there is nothing stopping you asking a recruiter, hiring manager, or interviewer about the organisational culture and values. You need to get a fit for you and how you work.

#### Check the total package, not just the salary

While pay isn't everything, it's important to understand your market value and whether the total package meets your needs. You can use online platforms like Glassdoor, Payscale, and Indeed to perform salary benchmarking. However, also check what leave, insurances, flexibility, and pension options are available. You might also look at work-life balance as a key driver in your decision making after years of

deploying on operations, so don't be scared to check working hours and conditions.

The opportunity for you to find out more is open and available to you, you just have to ask. Speak to other veterans about their employment experiences

Nothing beats hearing directly from someone who's already walked the path from service to civilian employment. You can use tools like LinkedIn to reach out to veterans working at a company that may be of interest to you, and you can also join veteran support groups that help others find opportunities. Reach out to veteran networks, attend networking events and company open days, and seek out veterans to talk about their employment experience. Their insights and experiences could be invaluable to you.

#### Explore employer reputation and stability

Working for a stable, reputable organisation is especially important if you're seeking long-term employment after service. It is therefore imperative you conduct some research into potential employers, look at their financial health, any news about business performance,

comments about their reputation or brand, potential scandals, allegations raised that they are struggling - these are all significant red flags worth looking into further.

Those employers could be a bad choice and do more harm to your future career than good. You can however use tools like Google Alerts to browse news stories and industry updates by company name to help you dig a bit deeper about potential employers. Take the time to do some research for sake of your career and employability in longer term.

**"Nothing beats hearing directly from someone who's already walked the path from service to civilian employment. You can use tools like LinkedIn to reach out to veterans."**

#### Utilise support frameworks already in place

There are several resources specifically designed to help UK Armed Forces personnel evaluate potential employers, and many provide additional services to help those going through resettlement. Naturally the CTP has opportunities that can be tapped into, but there are also military charities, regimental or service associations, specialist recruiters like Forces Recruitment Solutions, FrontFoot, and Cognitio Connect who support leavers in either a general or niche capacity, and there are also schemes such as Step into Health to help

provide pathways to new careers.

Similar transition opportunities also exist across the Civil Service and the emergency services - additionally, some Defence outsource partners actively encourage ex-military personnel to join them.

#### Conclusion

To conclude this piece, moving into civilian employment for Armed Forces personnel is about much more than a job title or paycheck. It's about finding an environment where your service experience is respected, your skills are valued, and your future is supported. By taking the time to research, ask the right questions, and connect with other veterans, you can confidently identify employers that are genuinely good to work for and avoid those that are not.





For many without a trade, the looming question as you approach resettlement is: “if I don’t have a trade, is it over for me?” Graham Brown says: absolutely not!

# FROM BOOTS TO BUSINESS: PREPARING FOR LIFE AFTER SERVICE WITHOUT A TRADE



GRAHAM BROWN

**In today’s employment landscape, employers are as interested in mindset, leadership, and values as they are in hard technical skills.**

In fact, over 50% of new employer briefs I see ask for the “military mindset” even when they don’t quite have the language for it. Resilience, loyalty, calm under pressure, ability to motivate others; these are what employers struggle to find in the civilian workforce.

Your challenge In the last 12 months of service is to translate, qualify, and connect. Here’s how.

## 12-24 Months Out – Start Planning

Audit your achievements. Don’t just list duties, capture outcomes. Did you save time, money, resources, or lead a team to deliver results? That’s what matters to employers. (See my Myth Busters of the Killer CV article from the Pathfinder archive).

Decide your direction. You may not land straight into a COO (Chief Operating Officer) role, but you already “do ops” – you just didn’t call it that. Think Operations Manager, Project Manager, or Programme Lead as logical first steps. Look at vacancies. Start to rule things in and rule things out by searching online for roles that might interest you.

Geography. Where will you resettlement? What will make that flexible? Would flexible working work for you (if it’s on offer).

Narrow down your options. Once you’ve done this review your ELC credits.

## 9 Months Out – Get Qualified



“50% of new employer briefs I see ask for the “military mindset” Resilience, loyalty, calm under pressure, ability to motivate others; these are what employers struggle to find in the civilian workforce.”

Use your ELC credits wisely. Career first, course second. Pick qualifications that bridge the gap into civilian roles: PRINCE2, NEBOSH, APM, Six Sigma.

Employers are often blown away when they learn about ELCs. Mention it in interviews, it shows you’re thinking about adding value before you’ve even joined. (See my The Value of ELCs from an Employer’s Viewpoint from the Pathfinder archive).

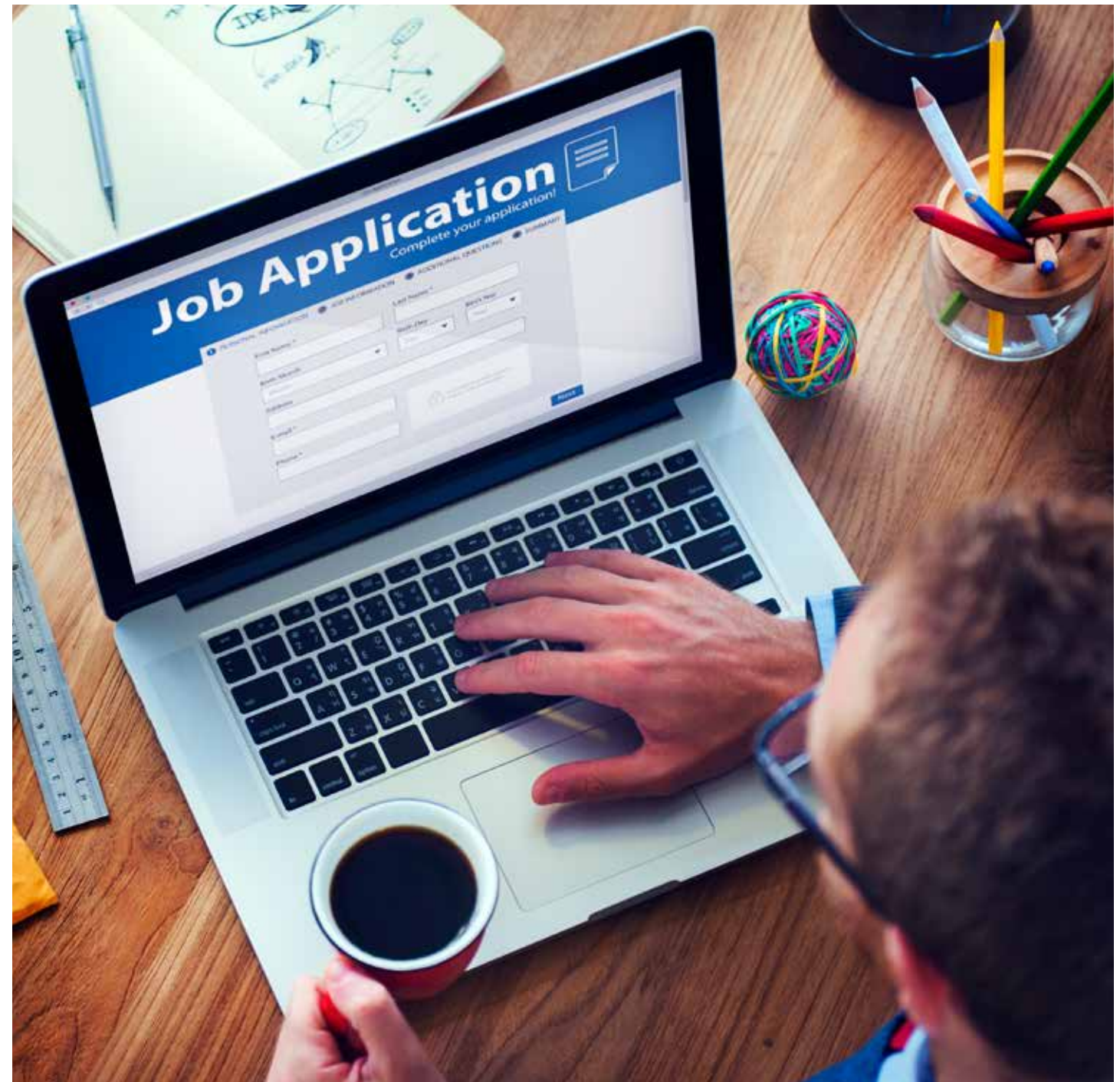
Benchmark your level. Be realistic about the scale of business you can step into. If you’ve led 120 soldiers on deployment, that’s equivalent to running a complex operations function, but it’s not the same as managing £20m

turnover on day one. (See my Are You Ready to Be a Chief Operating Officer? Article from the Pathfinder archive). Yes, again.

**6 Months Out – Build Your Story** Polish your CV. Keep it to 2–3 pages, translate military terms into outcomes, and explain acronyms. Achievements matter more than responsibilities. (See my The Obvious Stuff That Needs to Be in Your CV article from the Pathfinder archive).

Optimise your LinkedIn profile. Employers will look you up. Have a professional photo, a headline that fits the job you want, and an “About” section that sells your leadership and operational strengths. (See my How to Tune Up Your LinkedIn Profile article from the Pathfinder archive).

Think behaviour, not just skill.



Employers hire on skill and fire on behaviour. Get clear on your natural style using tools like behavioural profiling – are you a completer, a motivator, an organiser? (See my Behavioural Profiling – Like it or Not? Article from the Pathfinder archive).

**3 Months Out – Test Yourself** Civilian Work Attachment. A placement gives you a taste of civvy street and lets you practice your translation skills in real time.

Practice interviews. Civilians are experts at self-promotion. You need

to get comfortable telling your story confidently without feeling arrogant. (See my Military Leadership – The Best on the Planet. Just Remember It! Article from the Pathfinder archive).

## Final Weeks – Position Yourself

Know your worth. Ignore the myth that you should expect a 20% pay cut. Benchmark salaries on Glassdoor or CV Library and negotiate based on your impact: the value you add in saving time, saving money, or making money. (See my Get Paid What You’re Worth article from the Pathfinder archive).

Network hard. Many jobs are filled before they hit a job board. Use LinkedIn groups, veteran networks, and yes – even WhatsApp groups – to connect and open doors. (See my Networking Tips for Non-Networkers article from the Pathfinder archive).

## KEY TAKEAWAY

You are not “just infantry.” You are a leader, planner, motivator, and problem-solver. Employers can teach technical skills; they can’t teach resilience, loyalty, and calm under fire. Your final 12 months is about three things:

- Translate your military experience into business outcomes.
- Qualify yourself with relevant civilian certifications.

- Connect with employers and networks that value what you bring. Do those three things, and you’ll find more doors open than you ever expected. I work with 2 people per month on an executive coaching basis. If you’re interested in some 1 to 1 guidance, reach out to me.



**Further Information**  
To reach out to Graham for advice or support, contact him on 01353 645004 or [gbrown@forcesrecruitment.co.uk](mailto:gbrown@forcesrecruitment.co.uk)

You can download my operational support document for FREE at [www.2icsearch.co.uk/coomatrix](http://www.2icsearch.co.uk/coomatrix)





10 years on, Pathfinder examines why Bronze, Silver and Gold ERS awards still matter - for employers, veterans and the nation...

# THE DEFENCE EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

**The UK's Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) has become a quiet engine of national resilience.**

Sitting alongside the Armed Forces Covenant, the ERS recognises employers who back the Armed Forces community in practical, measurable ways.

They achieve this through fair recruiting, supportive HR policies, and day-to-day flexibility for Reservists, veterans, Service spouses and partners, Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAVs), and those who are mobilised.

A decade on, the ERS is more than a badge. It's a signal - to employees, customers, and competitors - that an organisation understands the value of service and is prepared to turn warm words into action.

**Where the ERS Comes From and Why It Exists**

The ERS emerged from the UK Government's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, the national promise that those who serve, or have served, and their families are treated fairly. The Covenant reframed support for the Armed Forces community as a broad societal responsibility, not just a matter for the MOD or charities. The ERS converts that promise into employer-level practice: tangible, trackable, and visible.

The motivations behind the ERS are

threefold:

- Fairness and duty: Make good on the Covenant by reducing disadvantage for those who serve or have served.
- Capability and resilience: Ensure Reservists can train and mobilise without jeopardising careers; bring hard-won military skills into the civilian economy.
- Economic value: Help employers access a pipeline of disciplined, adaptable talent

with leadership experience and mission focus: attributes that drive productivity.

**How the Tiers Work: Bronze, Silver, Gold**

At its core, the ERS is a tiered recognition model. Each level builds on the last, moving from intent to implementation to advocacy.

**Bronze – Your Public Commitment**

What it signals: An employer has signed the Armed Forces Covenant and publicly pledged to

support the Armed Forces community.

- Typical features:**
- A published Covenant with practical pledges.
  - Awareness-raising among managers (e.g. recognising the needs of Reservists and spouses).
  - Positive messaging in recruitment materials ("Armed Forces community welcome to apply").

Why it matters: Bronze turns goodwill into a public promise. For many SMEs, it's the first confident step into structured support.

- Silver – Policies in Practice**
- What it signals: An employer has moved from intent to consistent practice.
- Typical features:**
- Supportive HR policies, often including additional paid leave for annual Reservist training.
  - Fair and open recruitment of veterans, service leavers, spouses/partners, and CFAVs (e.g., guaranteed interview schemes where candidates meet minimum criteria).
  - Processes to ensure mobilisation is not unreasonably refused.
- Internal champions who keep the commitments live.
- Why it matters: Silver demonstrates that support is embedded, not a one-off initiative but a repeatable, organisation-wide standard.

- Gold – Leadership and Advocacy**
- What it signals: An employer is a sector leader in Armed Forces support and actively encourages others to follow.
- Typical features:**
- Mature, well-communicated policies; senior leadership ownership.
  - Robust support through mobilisation, deployment, and return to work.
  - Supply-chain influence - encouraging suppliers and partners to sign the Covenant or pursue ERS recognition.
  - Active advocacy: sharing best practice across industry networks and regional employer forums.
- Why it matters: Gold holders raise the bar for their sector. Their advocacy multiplies impact beyond their own headcount.

- What's in It for Veterans, Reservists and Families?**
- **Fair routes into work**
- Open recruitment practices and manager awareness reduce the translation gap between military experience and civilian

- What's in It for Employers?**
- The ERS isn't just good citizenship. It's smart business.
- Access to exceptional talent
  - Service leavers bring leadership under pressure, problem-solving, team cohesion, and a bias for action. Many have technical qualifications in engineering, cyber, logistics, healthcare, or aviation. Spouses and partners offer portability of skills, high levels of resilience, and a track record of balancing complex demands.
  - **Stronger culture and retention**
- Clear policies for Reservists and families build loyalty. Employees who see their employer "walk the talk" on values are more likely to stay and recommend the organisation to others.
- **Enhanced resilience and risk management**
- Reservists train for crisis response, contingency planning, and decision-making in uncertain environments, directly relevant to business continuity, incident response, and operational recovery.
- **Employer brand and market advantage**
- ERS recognition supports ESG narratives, social value commitments, and, in some cases, public-sector procurement expectations linked to the Covenant. It helps employers stand out in competitive labour markets.
- **A ready-made framework for action**
- ERS provides a clear path: begin with policy basics (Bronze), operationalise support (Silver), then scale and influence (Gold). The structure reduces internal friction: HR, line managers, and executives can see what "good" looks like.

- job specs.
- **Predictable support**
- Policies for training leave, mobilisation, and reintegration mean Reservists can commit fully without risking their livelihoods.
- **Portable careers for families**
- Covenant-aware employers tend to be flexible around postings, childcare







**ERS is not a trophy cabinet  
- it's a playbook for building  
resilient teams and doing  
right by those who serve.**

challenges, and career interruptions, enabling spouses and partners to sustain progression.

- **Community and belonging**  
ERS employers often form internal networks for veterans and families, creating peer support and a sense of identity inside the workplace.

**The UK Government's Commitment and What It Means**

The UK Government's backing for the Armed Forces community is anchored in the Armed Forces Covenant and reinforced through legislation, cross-government policy, and the MOD's engagement with employers. The message is consistent: supporting the Armed Forces community is a whole-of-society effort. Business is a crucial partner.

For employers, that commitment shows up as:

- **Clarity:** A recognised framework (ERS) with public recognition at each tier.
- **Support:** Guidance from Defence Relationship Management (DRM), regional employer engagement teams, and networks

that share best practice.

- **Momentum:** A growing community of recognised employers across sectors - from micro-businesses to FTSE 100 firms - demonstrating that support is achievable at any size.

**Veterans' Employability: From Myth to Market Edge**

Despite persistent myths, the data and

- Getting Started:  
A Practical Roadmap for Employers**
- 1) Sign the Covenant (Bronze-level foundation)  
Draft realistic pledges: don't over-promise. Publish them and brief managers.
  - 2) Build the policy spine (towards Silver)
    - Reservist leave (often paid) for annual training.
    - Clear mobilisation guidelines and reintegration plans.
    - Inclusive recruitment wording and hiring manager training.
    - Data capture for Armed Forces

employer experience align: veterans are highly employable. They bring:

- **Leadership and followership:** The ability to step up or support, as the situation demands.
- **Mission execution:** Planning, prioritisation, and disciplined delivery under real-world constraints.
- **Technical acumen:** From avionics and nuclear engineering to cyber security and

community status (voluntary disclosure).

- 3) Empower champions  
Nominate a senior sponsor and an operational lead. Establish an internal network or buddy scheme for veterans and spouses.
- 4) Measure and share  
Track Armed Forces community hires, retention, and engagement. Share stories, internally and across your sector.
- 5) Lead and influence (Gold trajectory)  
Offer mentoring to other employers, present at regional forums, and cascade expectations into your supply chain.

- medical disciplines.
- **Human skills at scale:** Communication across diverse teams, cultural awareness, and coaching/mentoring experience.
- **Safety and standards:** A natural orientation to compliance, quality assurance, and safe systems of work.

For industries facing skills shortages - engineering, construction, logistics, manufacturing, cyber, healthcare - veterans represent a pipeline of motivated, values-driven talent.

**Checklist for HR & Leaders**

- **Covenant signed and published**
- **Reservist and mobilisation policy in place**
- **Inclusive recruitment language live on careers pages**
- **Hiring manager training scheduled**
- **Senior sponsor named; Armed Forces ERG active**
- **Data and case studies ready for ERS submission**

**For Service Leavers and Families: Making the Most of ERS**

Target ERS employers:  
Use the ERS badge as a shortcut for culture fit and policy support.

Translate your skills:  
Frame achievements in civilian outcomes: cost saved, risk reduced, people led, systems improved.

Leverage networks: Veteran ERGs, mentors, and ex-military managers can accelerate onboarding and progression.

Stay Reservist-ready: If you serve, learn your employer's policy early and keep managers informed about training cycles.

**The Bigger Picture: National Resilience, One Policy at a Time**

When employers adopt ERS standards, they're not just supporting individuals, they're strengthening the connective tissue between Defence and society. Reservists can train and

**Common Misconceptions**  
"ERS is only for big corporates."

Not so. Thousands of SMEs hold Bronze and Silver; many have progressed to Gold. Smaller firms often find ERS improves retention and reputation locally.

"Mobilisation will cripple the business."

With planning, it doesn't. Employers report that backfill arrangements, cross-training, and post-deployment skills return offset the challenge.

"Veterans lack civilian qualifications."

Increasingly untrue. Many Service leavers exit with accredited qualifications; where gaps exist, on-the-job training closes them quickly.

deploy. Veterans thrive and lead. Families are supported. Businesses get sharper, steadier, more values-driven teams. And the Covenant ceases to be an abstract promise; it becomes a daily reality.

That's the power of Bronze, Silver, and Gold.

**Final Word**

Whether you're an employer wondering where to begin, or a Service leaver scanning the jobs market, the ERS turns intent into impact. Start with the Covenant. Build the policies. Share the practice. Aim for Gold—not for the plaque on the wall, but for the people, the performance, and the national good it represents.

**Head to [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) to learn more.**

*Editor's note: ERS guidance and criteria are updated periodically. Employers should consult Defence Relationship Management (DRM) for the latest application windows and requirements.*





CAREERS

Understanding the dynamics of the recruitment market is essential when planning a transition into civilian employment...

# THE UK RECRUITMENT MARKET: OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES FOR SERVICE LEAVERS



**A**s summer draws to a close, the UK recruitment market is entering a period of mixed fortunes.

September has traditionally been one of the busier months for job postings, but the picture in 2025 is more complex than in recent years.

## Vacancy Trends – A Cooling Market

The most recent Report on Jobs from the Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC) shows that permanent placements across the UK have seen a marked decline over the past few months. This reflects employer caution in committing to long-term hires at a time of ongoing economic pressure and political uncertainty.

That said, the number of temporary and contract opportunities remains relatively strong. Employers are making use of flexible staffing models to maintain operational capacity without the long-term cost commitments of permanent recruitment. For Service leavers, this can be an important entry point – a way to prove skills in the workplace, gain new experiences, and potentially convert short-term contracts into longer-term positions.

## Candidate Supply on the Rise

While vacancies have cooled, candidate availability

has risen. Redundancies in some industries and a general desire among employees to explore new options have increased the pool of applicants. This makes the market more competitive. However, military personnel bring a unique advantage: proven leadership, problem-solving ability under pressure, and transferable skills in logistics, operations, cyber, and engineering. These qualities continue to be highly sought after, particularly in sectors where resilience and discipline are valued.

## Sector Strengths and Regional Variations

Despite the overall cooling trend, some industries continue to hire actively. Public Sector Roles – The civil service, local authorities, and emergency services are seeking individuals who can manage projects, lead teams, and deliver

## Pay and Conditions

Salary growth in the UK has slowed. With candidate supply rising and vacancies easing, employers are in a stronger position to control wage inflation. This means that while veterans are often highly employable, salary negotiation may be tighter than in the peak recruitment years post-pandemic. However, many employers continue to emphasise broader benefits packages, Armed Forces Covenant commitments, and career development opportunities to attract talent.

under pressure. Veterans are particularly well-suited to these environments.

Engineering and Infrastructure – Major national projects in transport, energy, and defence supply chains are generating opportunities for technically skilled candidates.

Technology and Cyber Security – As organisations continue to invest in digital transformation and data protection, demand for cyber and IT professionals remains high.

Logistics and Transport – Supply chain resilience remains a national priority, and the sector continues to employ

veterans with planning and operational expertise.

Regionally, Scotland and the South West have shown more growth in job postings than other areas, according to the REC Labour Market Tracker. Service leavers willing to be flexible on location, or open to hybrid and remote roles, will find broader opportunities.

## The Hidden Jobs Market

Up to 60% of roles are never formally advertised, existing instead in the so-called “hidden jobs market.” Networking – whether through LinkedIn, Armed Forces resettlement events, or specialist veteran recruitment services – is critical.

Many employers actively seek to employ veterans but rely on referrals and targeted outreach rather than public advertising. Pathfinder’s own recruitment services and job boards are designed to connect Service leavers directly with these veteran-friendly employers.

## Positioning Yourself for Success

For Service leavers, entering a competitive but opportunity-rich recruitment landscape requires focus:

- Translate your military CV into civilian language that highlights transferable skills.
- Be open to temporary and contract work as a pathway to permanent employment.
- Network effectively with employers, recruiters, and other veterans.
- Seek out Covenant signatory organisations and those recognised by the Employer Recognition Scheme, as these are committed to supporting the Armed Forces community.
- Invest in professional qualifications where necessary, particularly in cyber, project management, and technical fields.

## The Veteran Advantage: A Competitive Edge

While the broader UK recruitment market is experiencing tougher competition, Service leavers possess a combination of qualities that stand out to employers. This “veteran advantage” can be the decisive factor in securing interviews and job offers.

- **Leadership and Teamwork** Veterans are trained from day one to lead and to follow. They know how to motivate diverse teams, make decisions under pressure, and maintain cohesion even in stressful environments. For employers facing complex projects or periods of uncertainty, this ability to bring people together and keep momentum is invaluable.
- **Problem-Solving Under Pressure** Military operations demand the ability

to think clearly in high-stakes situations. Veterans are adept at analysing information quickly, adapting plans, and delivering results when it matters most. Employers increasingly value this agility in industries where disruption – whether technological, economic, or logistical – is the new normal.

## Technical and Transferable Skills

Many Service leavers carry across qualifications and experience in engineering, IT, cyber security, logistics, healthcare, and project management. Beyond technical expertise, veterans also bring universal skills such as discipline, time management, and the ability to work within structured systems.

- **Resilience and Reliability** Employers consistently cite resilience as one of the most attractive attributes of ex-Forces personnel. Veterans are accustomed to long hours, demanding workloads, and the need to persevere until the task is complete. This reliability makes them trusted hires, especially in sectors where continuity and

dependability are paramount.

- **Commitment to Continuous Learning** From weapons systems to leadership courses, Service life is built around professional development. Veterans bring this appetite for lifelong learning into civilian employment. Employers who invest in training find veterans eager to upskill, retrain, or adapt to new technologies.

▪ **Values and Integrity** Employers also value the ethos instilled by military service: integrity, respect, loyalty, and service before self. These traits foster trust, strong workplace cultures, and alignment with corporate social responsibility agendas. For companies committed to the Armed Forces Covenant, hiring veterans is not only the right thing to do but also a proven business asset.

In the current recruitment climate where employers are cautious and want maximum return on every hire, veterans bring something distinctive: the ability to deliver consistently, adapt quickly, and strengthen teams.

This combination gives them a genuine competitive edge, even in a crowded candidate market.



“While the broader UK recruitment market is experiencing tougher competition, Service leavers possess a combination of qualities that stand out to employers.”





Across the UK, many former Service personnel have successfully transitioned into franchising...

**F**or many leaving the Armed Forces, the transition to civilian employment brings both opportunity and uncertainty.

The question of “what next?” can be daunting, but one pathway increasingly embraced by veterans is franchising.

By combining the discipline, leadership, and resilience developed in Service with a tried-and-tested business model, franchising offers ex-military personnel a structured route into entrepreneurship.

#### Why Franchising Appeals to Veterans

Unlike starting a business from scratch, franchising offers the advantage of stepping into a proven system. Franchisees benefit from established branding, ongoing training, and a supportive network of fellow business owners. This structured environment resonates strongly with those who have thrived in the military, where teamwork, adherence to systems, and mission focus are part of daily life.

Ex-military personnel also tend to bring natural strengths that franchisors look for:

- **Leadership and Team Management** – running a franchise often involves recruiting, training, and motivating a team.
- **Operational Discipline** – following set procedures and maintaining standards is second nature for those with a Service background.
- **Resilience and Problem-Solving** – handling setbacks calmly and finding solutions mirrors the adaptability learned in uniform.
- **Community Focus** – many franchise businesses thrive on building local relationships, something veterans often find rewarding.

#### The Franchising Landscape

In the UK, franchising has grown into a multi-billion-pound sector, covering industries from food and hospitality to health, education, logistics, and property services. Well-known high-street names sit alongside newer, niche opportunities. For Service leavers, this variety allows them to match their interests, skills, and financial ambitions with the right business model.

Some franchises require larger upfront investment, such as fast-food outlets or retail operations, while others offer lower-cost entry points—such as home-based services, training, or consultancy franchises. The British Franchise Association (bfa) plays a key role in accrediting franchisors and supporting franchisees, helping newcomers navigate the market safely.

#### Training and Support

Most franchisors provide comprehensive training programmes, covering both technical and business management skills. This may include sales, marketing, compliance, and customer service. Many also run mentorship schemes where new franchisees can learn from more experienced operators.

For veterans, there is additional support through schemes like the Career Transition Partnership (CTP), which offers advice on self-

# FRANCHISING: A CAREER PATHWAY FOR EX-MILITARY PERSONNEL

employment, and organisations such as X-Forces Enterprise, which helps Service leavers explore enterprise pathways and access Start Up Loans.

#### Funding a Franchise

While some personal investment is usually required, there are funding options available. High-street banks often look favourably on franchise businesses due to their proven models, and many have dedicated franchising units. Ex-military personnel can also explore government-backed loan schemes to support their entry into business ownership.

#### Success Stories

Across the UK, many former Service personnel have successfully transitioned into franchising. Some run multiple outlets of well-known chains, while others choose smaller, specialist operations that align with their personal passions. What unites them is the ability to apply military-honed skills to the civilian business world.

One former Army officer who became a

franchisee in the logistics sector noted: “The systems and procedures were clear, and I could focus on leading my team and delivering results. It felt very similar to how we operated in the Army, only with customers instead of commanders.”

#### Points to Consider

While franchising offers many advantages, it is not a guaranteed route to success. Veterans considering this pathway should carefully research:

- The franchisor’s reputation and financial track record.
- The initial and ongoing fees, and what support is included.
- Territory rights and growth potential.

- How the business fits with family life and long-term goals.

Due diligence, much like operational planning in the Forces, is vital.

#### A Structured Step into Civilian Enterprise

For ex-military personnel who want to run their own business but prefer the backing of a proven system, franchising can be an excellent choice. It provides the balance of independence and support, allowing veterans to become part of a wider network while building something of their own.

As franchising continues to grow across the UK economy, Service leavers are well placed to take advantage, bringing with them the values of leadership, commitment, and community that are the hallmarks of both military service and successful business ownership.

“Franchising gives Service leavers the best of both worlds – the independence of running your own business, with the security of a proven system and support network.”

## TOP 5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT FRANCHISING

#### Proven Systems

You’re buying into a tried-and-tested business model with training, branding, and ongoing support.

#### Military Skills Transfer Well

Leadership, discipline, and problem-solving are exactly what franchisors look for.

#### Wide Range of Sectors

From fast food to property services, logistics to education, there’s a

franchise to match different skills, interests, and budgets.

#### Funding Support Available

Many banks have dedicated franchising teams, and veterans can also access government-backed Start Up Loans.

#### Do Your Research

Check the franchisor’s reputation, financial health, and support package before you commit.



## UK LEADS EUROPE WITH STANDOUT SUCCESS AT EUROPEAN FRANCHISE AWARDS 2025

**British Franchise brands swept the board at the recent European Franchise Awards in Belgium. The UK was the only country to have finalists in all categories, with each one receiving a podium finish on the night.**

The first European Franchise Awards were first held in 2022, and this year attracted a sell-out crowd for the ceremony. Entrants to the awards are nominated by the 18 national franchise associations who are members of the European Franchise Federation (EFF). Countries submit applications from the winners of their own domestic award competitions.

Mathias Lehner, EFF Chair said: “The European Franchise Awards are a unique opportunity to bring the franchise community together, to celebrate the best in class in franchising. It is a privilege for us to meet with and celebrate some of the best concepts and individuals in our sector”.

According to their latest British Franchise Association (BFA) survey, sponsored by NIC Local, the UK has over 1,000 franchise systems, with more than 50,000 franchise

units and contributes £19.1bn to the UK economy. It’s ‘forced commercial failure rate’ has been less than 6% for over 20 years.

#### British brand winners

Domiciliary care brand Right at Home were the undisputed winners of the night, taking home the prestigious Gold award in the ‘Franchisor of the Year’ category. Franchise specialist solicitors Stevens & Bolton, claimed Gold in the ‘Services to Franchising Award’, whilst Canopy Nurseries took home the Bronze award in the ‘Emerging Brand’ category. Cost management consultancy ERA Group (Formerly Expense Reduction Analysts) were awarded Silver in the ‘International Brand’ category and franchisee, Jon Radford from Football Fun Factory, took home the Bronze position in the ‘Franchisee of the Year Award’.

Pip Wilkins QFR, CEO of the BFA who travelled to Brussels for the awards said:

“What a proud, proud night for British franchising. We send our hugest congratulations to Right at Home, Stevens & Bolton, Canopy Nurseries, ERA Group and to Jon Radford from Football Fun Factory on their magnificent triumphs. They have all worked extraordinarily hard to get here and deserve every bit of the applause

they received from their European colleagues on the night, displaying, as they have, the very best of British franchising.”

She continued: “However, I don’t just see this as a win for the five individual brands; as an unregulated franchising sector, we have proven tonight that we do not need laws to be successful. The UK is widely respected abroad, and I believe our success proves that our franchisors don’t need tick boxes to ensure they are doing the right thing; they choose to do the right thing anyway, through their commitment to their BFA membership and our Code of Ethical Conduct.”

Alisdair Gray, executive director of the European Franchise Federation (EFF) said:

“Last night’s European Franchise Awards were a true Who’s Who of franchising. Across the five categories the UK finalists did exceptionally well, bringing home two golds, two silvers and a bronze trophy. UK franchise concepts continue to lead the way in Europe and globally, and it was a real pleasure to meet some of the wonderful brands setting the tone for excellence across all sectors of franchising.”

#### The full list of winners was:

##### Franchisor of the Year

- Gold – Right at Home (UK)
- Silver – Hizi Hair
- Bronze – Isotec

##### Excellence Award

- Guy Hoquet

##### Franchisee of the Year

- Gold – Sari Körkkö
- Silver – Alessio Piccardi
- Bronze – Jon Radford (Football Fun Factory) (UK)
- Bronze – Karen Pollet

##### International Brand of the Year

- Gold – Mercure
- Silver – ERA Group (UK)
- Bronze – Fortidia

##### Emerging Franchise Brand

- Gold – X’pert Impact
- Silver – Zorgmaatje aan Huis
- Bronze – Canopy Nurseries (UK)

##### Emerging Franchisee

- Eugen Johannes

##### Emerging International Brand

- Tinker Labs

##### Services to Franchising

- Gold – Stevens & Bolton (UK)
- Silver – MCR Retailminds
- Bronze – Mobiloso

##### European Hall of Fame

- Manfred Maus

**For more information about the European Franchise Awards visit: [eff-franchise.com](http://eff-franchise.com) or to learn more about British franchising visit [www.thebfa.org](http://www.thebfa.org)**





The UK Government's announcement of VALOUR signalled what many veterans' organisations have long called for: a more joined-up, accessible, and equitable network of services for those who have served.

# VALOUR: A NEW ERA OF HOUSING SUPPORT FOR UK VETERANS

**W**hile VALOUR covers several domains including health, employment, welfare, and skills, its housing component could be one of the most immediately life-changing for veterans facing insecurity or homelessness. Here's what VALOUR means for housing, what's already in motion, and what veterans should be aware of.

## What is VALOUR?

Launched in May 2025 and backed by £50 million in funding, VALOUR is the UK Government's latest veteran support programme.

The key features are:

- Support centres recognised under VALOUR across the UK, tailored to local need.
- Regional Field Officers who will link up charities, public services, local councils, and veterans themselves to coordinate and improve access to support.
- Improved data gathering and insight to monitor where gaps exist and ensure services respond to demand.

Importantly, VALOUR aims not to invent entirely new services in every area, but to connect, strengthen, and make visible what already exists.

## Housing Support under VALOUR: What's Promised

Housing is one of four "key need areas" that VALOUR is targeting. What does that look like in practice?

Some of the housing-specific provisions include:

- Housing advice and support via VALOUR Support Centres**  
These centres will (among other things) offer advice around housing issues, helping veterans understand what they're entitled to, how to access social housing or other housing support, and navigating welfare options linked to housing.
- Removal of local connection requirement for veterans seeking social housing**  
One obstacle many veterans have faced is the requirement in some local authority social housing policies to have a "local connection" (e.g. having lived in a place for a certain period) before one can apply. The government has announced that this requirement will be removed for veterans.
- Homelessness services funding**  
Prior to VALOUR,

the government had committed funds for homelessness services focusing on veterans. VALOUR builds on that work by aiming to tie in local service provision with national coordination so that help is more reliably available.

- Connecting stakeholders**  
The Regional Field Officers will have a role in ensuring local government, housing associations, charities offering veteran housing, and other bodies co-operate more effectively, share best practice, prevent duplication, and identify gaps — which may include insufficient housing stock, poor quality housing, or lack of specialist supported housing in some areas.

## What Is Still Unclear

As promising as the framing of VALOUR is, there remain open questions about how housing support under the initiative will work in practice. Key issues include:

- Timing and rollout:** While pilot areas have been selected (Greater Manchester; Liverpool City Region; West Yorkshire; South Yorkshire) to test VALOUR support centres and associated services, the full rollout nationwide will take time.
- Resources and capacity:** Even without VALOUR, many local authorities and charities report being stretched. For housing, issues like supply of social housing, quality of temporary accommodation, and supported housing capacity will limit how quickly changes can be made.
- Visibility and consistency:** Because services have been patchy (what veterans in one part of the country can access may differ significantly from elsewhere) there is a risk that unless carefully managed, VALOUR simply overlays one set of administrative structures over an uneven terrain. Ensuring that veterans in rural areas, or those outside big population centres, get equal access will be critical.
- Clarification of eligibility and criteria:** For example, what counts as "housing

**“One obstacle many veterans have faced is the requirement in some local authority social housing policies to have a “local connection” before one can apply. This requirement will be removed for veterans...”**

## HOW VALOUR CAN CHANGE A HOUSING JOURNEY: CHRIS, 38, ROYAL ENGINEERS VETERAN

After serving 14 years, Chris left the Army in 2023. He returned to his hometown, only to find that he didn't meet the council's "local connection" criteria for social housing, having spent most of his Service career elsewhere. With no fixed address and casual work, Chris soon found himself sofa-surfing with friends and struggling with rising costs.

By early 2025, Chris was referred to a VALOUR Support Centre in Greater Manchester. There, he met a housing adviser who:

- Explained that under VALOUR, veterans no longer need a local connection to apply for social housing.
- Helped him apply for a tenancy with a housing association.
- Connected him with a Regional Field Officer, who coordinated with SSAFA to secure temporary accommodation while the application was processed.
- Signposted him to an employment adviser at the same centre, who supported him in finding steadier work.

**Outcome:** Within three months, Chris was offered a one-bedroom flat through the housing association. He now has a secure base, making it easier to pursue new work and training.

Without VALOUR, Chris would likely still be caught in the "local connection" trap. With it, his housing need was recognised quickly, and he was able to access tailored, joined-up support.

**CHRIS'S STORY**



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“  
For veterans facing housing stress, VALOUR may not be a silver bullet overnight, but it could signal a turning point. For those already working in the sector, VALOUR offers a chance to remedy longstanding gaps.”

issue” under VALOUR support centres; how veterans access funding/support through these centres; what support is available under welfare benefits vs what must be arranged by councils or housing associations.

#### Potential Consequences and Impact

If implemented well, the housing component of VALOUR could deliver: Reduced homelessness among veterans, by earlier intervention, clearer advice, and removing barriers (like local connection rules).

Faster and more navigable access to social housing or other secure housing options where needed, avoiding long waits or confusing paperwork.

Better housing outcomes overall (in terms of quality, suitability, location) because coordination can help identify gaps (e.g. supported housing, accessible housing).

Improved wellbeing, since stable housing is foundational to health, employment prospects, mental resilience, etc.

#### Veteran Voices and the Housing Landscape

Veterans’ organisations have welcomed VALOUR, but some caution that it cannot replace urgent housing measures or compensate fully for systemic housing shortages. Some veterans face multiple overlapping issues: mental health, employment gaps, disability, and these complicate housing needs. What is hoped for

is that VALOUR’s structure allows those complexities to be addressed holistically.

#### Conclusion

VALOUR is an ambitious attempt to tackle one of the thorniest issues veterans face: inconsistent and hard-to-navigate support, including in housing.

By putting in place nationally coherent structures (support centres, field officers), removing barriers (such as local connection requirements), and embedding data and feedback, the Government has the potential to make a meaningful difference. However, the success of its housing commitments will depend not just on policy, but on adequate resources, local capacity, and continuous oversight to ensure equity across region, type of veteran need, and urgency of housing crises.

For veterans facing immediate housing stress, VALOUR may not be a silver bullet overnight, but it could signal a turning point. For those already working in the sector, VALOUR offers a chance to remedy longstanding gaps. Pathfinder readers, many of whom are veterans themselves or close to service communities, will want to watch how VALOUR develops in the coming months: how the support centres define their housing remit; how Regional Field Officers engage with local providers; and how housing charities and councils are resourced to deliver on these promises.

**For immediate housing concerns, veterans can still access:**  
**Op FORTITUDE (homelessness support line, 0800 952 0774).**  
**SSAFA Forcesline (0800 260 6767).**  
**Local councils’ housing departments (legal duty to help prevent homelessness).**

## WHAT VETERANS SHOULD DO NOW: HOUSING SUPPORT UNDER VALOUR

#### Find your local VALOUR Support Centre

Pilot areas (2025): Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire.

More centres to roll out across the UK.

Centres provide housing advice, welfare guidance, and signposting to local services.

#### Ask about the “local connection” rule

Under VALOUR, veterans will no longer need a “local connection” to apply for social

housing.

If a local authority suggests otherwise, refer to the new VALOUR provision and request clarification.

#### Connect with your Regional Field Officer (RFO)

Each VALOUR region will have an RFO tasked with coordinating housing, welfare, and charity support.

Veterans can request contact details from their local VALOUR centre or council.

**Seek tailored housing advice early**

Whether you’re leaving Service soon, already in civilian life, or facing housing insecurity, don’t wait until crisis point.

VALOUR centres are designed to catch problems early and link you with appropriate housing pathways. **Keep an eye on updates** VALOUR is rolling out in phases through 2025–26.

New guidance will be published on gov.uk and through veterans’ organisations such as Cobseo, RBL, and SSAFA.

## RESETTLEMENT AND ELC FUNDED COURSES



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## UKRAINE TECH SHARING AGREEMENT TO DELIVER DRONES AND JOBS

**The UK will manufacture and jointly develop cutting-edge military equipment with Ukrainian industry through a groundbreaking new technology sharing agreement which will support British jobs and strengthen both UK and Ukrainian national security.**

The first joint project, announced at the DSEI trade show in London, is an advanced new air defence interceptor drone, named Project OCTOPUS, which will be mass produced in the UK, with a target to produce thousands per month to provide to Ukraine to support its ongoing fight for freedom against Putin’s illegal full-scale invasion.

Interceptor drones are considerably cheaper than regular air defence missiles and are proving to be highly effective in countering the waves of one-way attack drones Russia continues to launch at Ukraine’s cities. They fly quickly to intercept incoming drones and missiles, destroying them before they reach their targets.

They will help Ukraine defend against aerial attacks such as Russia’s reckless overnight attack against western Ukraine, which saw Poland and NATO scramble to intercept Russian drones

that entered Polish airspace. The Prime Minister and Defence Secretary both condemned Russia’s attack, voicing support for Poland.

The new tech sharing agreement has been made possible as a result of the growing industrial partnership between the UK and Ukraine, announced by the Prime Minister after meeting President Zelenskyy this summer. Last week, Defence Secretary John Healey visited Kyiv and signed an expansion to the partnership, allowing sharing and joint development of intellectual property.

The technology sharing arrangement is among the first of its kind signed with Ukraine, allowing for unprecedented collaboration between British and Ukrainian companies, in a move that provides options to expand industrial capacity and harness defence as an engine for growth – supporting investment and delivering on the government’s Plan for Change.

It comes as the government announced hundreds of millions of pounds of new investment through the Defence Industrial Strategy this week to make defence an engine for growth, with £250 million of new funding to for new defence growth deals across the UK, and £182m to fund a new skills package to be delivered by five new defence technical excellence colleges, to train and upskill thousands of workers.

Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, said:

“As Russia continues its egregious and unrelenting attacks on Ukraine, the UK’s support will not falter, and we alongside our allies will continue to step up. This new partnership is a landmark moment, bringing together British and Ukrainian ingenuity to deliver cutting-edge defence drone technology to fight back against Russian aggression.

“By harnessing the strength of our world-class defence industry, we are not only helping Ukraine defend itself against Putin’s barbaric attacks, but we are also creating British jobs, driving growth, and securing our own future. This is all delivering on our Plan for Change.”

Defence Secretary John Healey MP said:

“The Strategic Defence Review set us the challenge to learn the lessons from the war in Ukraine. Through this groundbreaking industrial partnership with Ukraine, and our new Defence Industrial Strategy, we are revving up our world-leading defence industry. We will innovate at a wartime pace, support UK and Ukrainian security, and boost jobs here in Britain.

“This deal is a first of its kind, giving UK industry unprecedented access to the latest equipment designs, supporting Ukraine in its fight to defend against Putin’s illegal invasion and showing how defence can be an engine for growth as we deliver on our Plan for Change.”





## Join Our Team – Junior Systems Technician

**Location:** Global Marine Group (HQ is in UK)

**Starting Salary:** £36,000 per annum

Global Marine Group is seeking a Junior Systems Technician to join our specialist subsea operations team. This is an offshore position based onboard our vessels, in which you will support the Chief Cable/Subsea Engineer while gaining hands-on experience with advanced subsea systems and jointing technologies, offering a unique opportunity to build your career in the offshore cable industry.

### Key Responsibilities

- Undertake training and development towards full System Technician competence, including:
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- UJ/EUJ Jointer training
- Basic IT skills training
- Assist in piloting submersibles (under supervision) and performing tool handling procedures.
- Support maintenance, fault-finding, and servicing of subsea and umbilical handling systems.
- Carry out optical fibre jointing, including radiography, to required specifications.
- Perform testing and maintenance of jointing and x-ray equipment.
- Assist in managing onboard x-ray materials, tooling, consumables, and stock.
- Maintain operational logs and follow company procedures, permits, and safety policies.
- Undertake watch-keeping duties in cable working areas and the operations control room as required.

### Candidate's Role

- Motivated to build a career in subsea engineering and cable jointing.
- Willing to undertake structured training and competency development.
- Committed to working safely and effectively in offshore environments.
- Strong attention to detail and ability to follow procedures.
- Degree, HND/HNC/NVQ Mech or Elec Eng

### What We Offer

- Competitive starting salary of £36,000 annually.
- Comprehensive training and certification programme.
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\*The MPGS recruits Current and  
Ex-Serving, Regular and Reserve  
personnel from all 3 Services





# BECOME A SOCIAL CARE PROVIDER WITH A SURECARE FRANCHISE

Are you thinking of starting a new chapter in your life? Do you want to make a positive difference in people's lives? Ever dream of being your own boss and running your own business?



SureCare is led by father-and-son duo Gary and Josh Farrer.

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SureCare franchisees play a vital role in the social care sector, supporting individuals at all stages of life's journey.

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Established in 1994, SureCare has been delivering professional care services to individuals in the comfort of their own homes for over 30 years.

This is all possible thanks to our network of franchise operators, serving local communities across the UK and providing quality care to those who need it most.

As the demand for social care rises – particularly in later life – more and more

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You don't need to come from a care or medical background to get started with a SureCare franchise. As a management franchise, we look for individuals with the drive to succeed, strong people skills to lead a dedicated team, and the passion to help others.

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Become your own boss whilst receiving franchising training and support



visit [surecarefranchise.co.uk](https://surecarefranchise.co.uk) for more information



## The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity is the principal charity of the Royal Navy



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