Research Report

Leaving the Armed Forces and Living as a Civilian: An Exploratory Study of Everyday Decision-Making

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Leaving the Armed Forces & Living in North Wales

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Leaving The Armed Forces and Living as a Civilian

An exploratory study of everyday decision-making as a civilian

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Foreward

Glyndwr University was funded by Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) to conduct this exploratory study of identity and transition from the Armed Forces to civilian life. Using the premise of a link between identity and perspective this research reveals influences of a collective military identity/perspective on everyday accounts of decision-making. An enduring frame of reference is identified that offers a rich context for understanding tensions and challenges experienced by those leaving the Armed Forces.

The findings focus on five significant areas of decision-making: Moving forward, Putting down roots, Changing pace, Living the moment and Being a veteran. The report outlines the methods used which include in-depth interview to form a context of understanding some of the challenges experienced and online concept-mapping to provide a prioritised view of recommendations. A model of transition is proposed that requires a cultural shift within the civilian community to become more aware of and sensitive to tensions experienced by veterans in their approach to everyday decision-making.

The report will have relevance to Local Authority policymakers, the NHS, Public Sector Service educators and Third Sector Support organisations. It will be of interest to civilians working in the field of veteran research and it will have relevance to community workers supporting the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant.

Glyndwr University is a Higher Education Institute in North East Wales that aims to improve education for access to employment, as part of a widening participation agenda. It has made a commitment to review and implement recommendations made in this report as part of a curricula development initiative for preparing Nurses, Social Workers, Prison and Police, Teachers and Housing Officers. The research draws on the wide demography across six Local Authorities of North Wales. It recruited participants using a range of strategies that were intended to raise the profile of the Local Authorities' interest in wanting to understand the needs of veterans in both rural and urban areas.

Nikki Lloyd-Jones

Preface

This report is a civilian's understanding of tensions experienced by people who have served in the Armed Forces and now navigating a civilian context.

Becoming comfortable with who you are, is more often than not, an unspoken process underpinned by confidence of implicit knowing. Conventionally, there is rarely an expectation to articulate an identity, it is taken-for-granted and up to others to work out. Even so, it is common to refer to an aspect of an identity as a way to seek common grounds for initiating conversation. This is because identity is a traditional flexible standard used as a basis for a mutual exchange of understanding between people. Identity in the civilian community is normally derived from where you live, what you do or in terms of relationships. For example I live in North Wales, I am a nurse, I am a wife and mother; for any of these claims to identity to have any common meaning there is reliance on the assumption that another will draw on similar frames of reference. These frames of reference influenced by cultural values and experience are not always similar. However, in these situations it is usual within the elasticity of a community context for some negotiation to take place before meaning making can occur.

When engaging in ordinary conversation it would be exhausting to consciously scope responses to each question, evaluate all options and measure every potential interpretation before responding. Therefore this study is relying on the notion that meaning making is implicit in spontaneous conversation and consistent with a taken-for-granted identity. The people in this study each have a military identity claim, and this is considered core to how they navigate their transition from being seen as a member of the Armed Forces to being recognised as a member of the civilian community. This report is examining how these people explain what it is like to be a veteran in a civilian community. To do this, 30 recorded conversations have been reviewed to identify phrases helpful in understanding examples of unconscious or spontaneous decision-making that reveal influences of a core military identity when in conversation with a civilian. Gathering data to inform a piece of research with the aim of influencing policy, education and practice requires careful management. Having received funding from the Forces in Mind Trust, it was essential to engage a team who could provide a variety of perspectives. Terms of reference were developed (Appendix 2) and meetings held regularly throughout the 2 year

project. Consistent with the methodology, emerging themes were discussed and explored further or discarded as insufficiently supported by the data. We relied on the voluntary participation of the veterans who took part, which resulted in over 200 pages of conversations recorded and transcribed. These were read again and again to hear noticeable expressions or phrases that could point to both deliberate and unconscious decision-making methods. It was a long iterative process with two of us engaging in repeated discussions before presenting to the steering group what we identified as significant exemplars of frames of reference for everyday decision-making as a veteran.

As would be expected, the different participants were individuals with distinguishing characteristics. The nature of the interviews meant that we were not looking for answers, we were encouraging diversity of perspectives to see if there were reference points that each used which would demonstrate a typical experience of transition. The theme headings are decision-making methods intending to provide a context for explaining a complex interplay of recognition, self-respect and trust, which emerged as salient when describing an ex-military decision-maker.

It is evident that those who have become members of the military have a strong and often enduring identity demonstrated by decision-making methods influenced by a certain way of seeing things. An example of this is 'mission command' a method for managing situations that is commonly understood by other military people without need for explanation. Not surprisingly, this decision-making approach is valued in leadership, management, risk assessment and safety training. These are traditionally roles in which it is anticipated such clarity of thinking reduces or indeed eliminates unnecessary noise and distractions, to enable focus on the best outcome in the circumstances. Another aspect of the military perspective that is familiar are the resources valued for gaining promotion through the ranks. These include endurance, adaptability, efficiency and initiative to complete tasks in pressure circumstances.

Many ex-service personnel are able to gain employment where this intuitive or unconscious military perspective is valued. As reported widely, transition for the majority of those who leave the Armed Forces is not problematic, particularly for those who gain worthwhile employment where their resources of specialist skills and knowledge are appreciated. Employment function, however, can be a minor facet to identity, indeed the perplexity of what it takes to build relationships, create a home, bring up a family, hold a job and construct a sense of self, can be overwhelming if given too much thought. Becoming confident in these aspects of identity is reliant on individual intuitive strategies for judging priorities about what matters when and to whom in a constantly changing social environment. It is not uncommon therefore to experience uncertainty in situations for which there are no reliable criteria for guiding or measuring performance. Similarly, there are occasion when outputs are likely to be evaluated from a range of perspectives each with differing time scales. It is clear that becoming part of the military ascribes particular qualities to a person's identity that are shared and recognised by other members. Outside this bounded world of the military some people can experience uncertainty about their spheres of membership. This was reflected in 'keeping in shape' as a method of retaining self-respect by reference to a military identity when navigating social norms with unfamiliar expectations.

This report is complimentary to the Armed Forces Covenant and the North Wales Local Authorities, NHS and Public Services commitment to the Social Care and Well-being Act and

the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. The study was developed in response to evidence of veteran organisations and charities as preferred resources for support rather than accessing Public Services available to all in the community. The findings do indeed highlight tensions when accessing Public Services which could be addressed by improving workers' understanding of veterans as a community. It attempts to articulate how the enduring military identity leads to challenges when navigating a civilian context. Moreover it is intended to contribute to policy debates and initiatives that enhance the success of these strategic approaches to improved communications and collaborations.

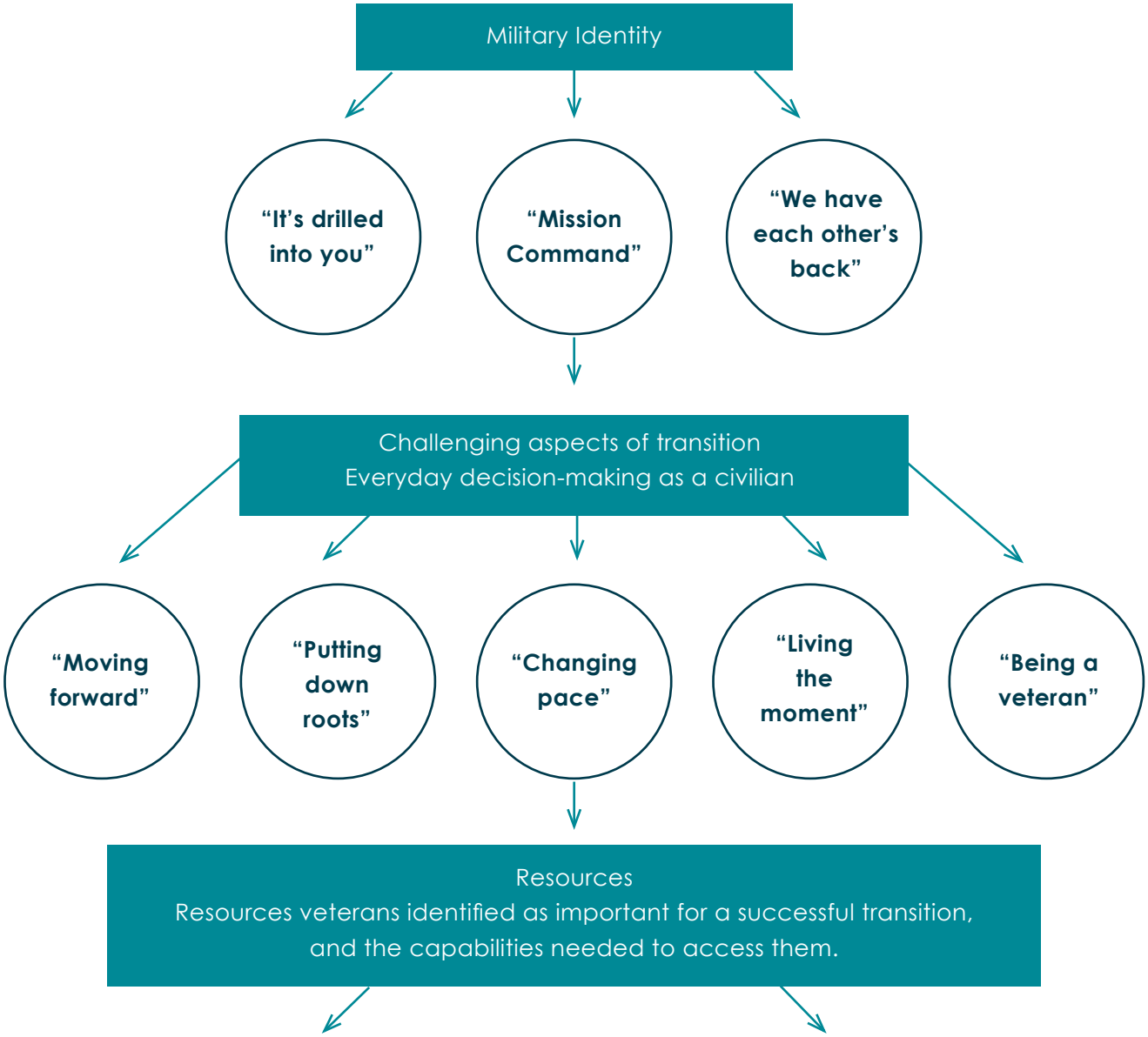
Recommendations include exploiting the current arrangements for people leaving the Armed Forces and enhancing them with stronger cultural preparation. Investment in cultural liaison appointments would build better communication networks that could be embedded within the wider community. The long term strategy should be to work towards mutual trust in creating a healthy society agenda that values social capital ex-military people can bring to a community and for the wider community to benefit from the community of veterans and their motivation to help others.

The report purports that to view improvements to the transition process as dependent on charities, organisations and services to meet veterans' needs, is to have too narrow a focus. The more difficult problem is to review current social policy towards enhancing healthy communities with veterans as valued members. It is acknowledged within this report that some veterans indeed have particular disadvantages when leaving the Armed Forces that are most effectively understood by other fellow veterans. Moreover, it also supports the aims of the Armed Forces Covenant for communities to acknowledge and respond to the Military context as significant when considering practical disadvantages for veterans and their families. It does however, also argue that in building a healthy community it is essential that these veterans do not deem themselves as outside or separated from the public services provision available to all citizens. A wider impact could be achieved by strengthening co-operative relations between local public services and veteran organisations towards improving all community needs.

"Committed to trying to bridge communications between those who have a military background and those who do not have such an insight, it is hoped that this report contributes to the conversation about the challenges associated with becoming a civilian."

Nikki Lloyd-Jones
Wrexham Glyndwr University

Figure 1 Research outline



Military Identity	Actionable resources
Sustaining all aspects of the military identity helps emotional resilience. The sustainability of this identity is more likely when context can be controlled, however, increased variables associated with living in the civilian community can make it challenging to 'keep in shape'.	**As well as practical resources commonly recognised as valued by all in the civilian community such as affordable housing and good schools, the veterans include reference to being able to manage frustrations and rejections. Addressing these personal capabilities can be significant to enhancing successful transition.**

Summary of Findings (Veteran Context)

The military perspective is an enduring and influential way a member of the ex-Forces community views situations and this perspective contains three constituent parts; 'It's drilled into you', 'Mission command' and 'We have each other's back'.

- When a person 'signs up' to the military they have made a commitment to all performance standards associated with military membership.
- Decision-making whilst in the military is synonymous with a 'mission command' approach meaning; endpoints are met as efficiently and reliably as possible with consistent goal-oriented behaviour.
- Members of the military regard each other as 'family' with 'have each other's backs' a method for describing unconditional trust placed in each other's reliability.

5 paradigm exemplars are used as methods for describing decision-making when becoming a civilian.

'Moving forward' is a familiar action that does not need explaining in a military context, however 'moving forward' in a civilian context can highlight tensions with how to advance or improve position and status. The skills and strategies required gain recognition in the civilian community are not easily transferred.

'Changing pace' refers to decision-making about how to respond to the radically different pace of the civilian world compared to the military. Tensions arise with prioritising how to spend time which requires a balance of personal resources including self-motivation and sensitivity towards unfamiliar others.

'Putting down roots' is a common decision influenced by motivation to change from a military identity to being a good spouse or parent. Tensions are displayed between the expectations and concessions required for day to day responsibility of 'putting down roots' and the familiarity of moving around.

'Living the moment' refers to decision-making about seeking authentic emotion of being in an environment where being and doing is without conscious performance. It is challenging to experience self-respect and pride for competent performance in apparently mundane situations.

'Being a veteran' is a phrase that is used to highlight challenges with changing from a collective identity to an individual identity of 'civilian'. 'Veteran' provides a standard that has recognition within a civilian community and can be adopted or rejected at will. It is how this identity of veteran is perceived by the ex-serviceman and the civilian community that can determine the value of it as a frame of reference.

Summary of Findings (Concept Mapping)

Resources

When asked about what resources would help in achieving a successful transition, there was consensus around eight areas of concern. Resources identified however, reflect a utilitarian approach to solutions which when interpreted in context with findings from the first stage, demonstrate the challenge for civic engagement, local authority provision and possibilities for social prescribing. The following resources considered as most important and challenging are presented with suggestions about how they may be addressed using a capabilities approach, the rest of the statements can be found in Appendix 4.

Putting down roots: To be able to provide a safe and affordable accommodation for a family, acquire a reliable income and get access to a good school for their children.

Making a living as a civilian: Is linked to accessing resources about how to convey experience and skills in a way that would be valued by a potential employer.

Changing pace: Is the largest group of personal resources identified as essential for the capability to make a successful transition. It reveals the challenges and importance placed on being able to endure and respond with tolerance to repeated frustrations and rejections. Having realistic expectations of measures of success and ability to prioritise commitments, acknowledging emotional vulnerability and managing expectations of others.

Mental health and specialist support services: This resource is recognised as both important for those with issues and employment for those who wanted to work with other veterans with specific problems.

Community Welcome: These were around resources reflecting how to address concerns about the people around the ex-service person being unfamiliar with the significance of the military, its culture and how this could affect the capability of the veteran to 'fit in'.

Veteran links: These were resources that were considered important by a small group of veterans who acknowledged contact hubs and military charities as necessary even if challenging for delivery on expectations. In comparison to other resources, however, these were considered the lowest priority.

Future plans and direction: These encompassed a number of resources identified as important if not challenging. Having confidence in potential and clear direction for future career were considered essential for the capability to move forward. Understanding the differences about 'progression' in 'civvy street' and the need for diplomatic sensitivity were also essential for the capability to fit in and feel valued.

Life skills: These resources of being able to drive, cook and being good around the house were essential for capability to live a normal life.

Recommendations

Strategic

It should be a common goal of the Local Authorities and other Public Sector organisations (eg Public Service Board) to move away from supporting a deficit-based view of veterans and:

- Build community partnership collaborations between public sector services and veteran organisations centered on common aims of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and Social Care and Well-being Act and the Armed Forces Covenant.
- Invest in sustainable community networks.
- Provide consistent advice and information for communities about health and wider social care provision availability.

Skills and Learning

It should be the goal of educators and learners to build relations and improve communications between the Armed Forces and Service Providers by:

- Establishing a mutually agreed agenda based on openness and sensitivity from which to initiate a conversation about objectives.
- Improving methods for translating veterans' experience and skills as transferable civilian currency.
- Ensuring all Public Facing workers curricula and CPD provision addressing veteran context as a particular consideration in their educational preparation.
- Higher education institutes becoming active in Covenant contributions to encourage ex-Armed Forces personnel to enroll into higher education courses.

Public Service Delivery

Improving collaborations between Armed Forces organisations and public sector service delivery could benefit the whole community by:

- Developing a simple guide on veterans' decision-making to support civilians' engagement. This could also be used to inform planning, marketing and delivery of public sector services
- Informing the development of a statutory training module for NHS and other Public sector workers on veterans' health and social care issues

- Improving signposting and availability of resources with more people able to offer a wide range of advice or referral for guidance in the local area.

- Make better utilisation of existing information services in the Local Authority area and NHS.

Further Research

- Research into how communities can develop imaginative mediums for understanding of contemporary 'veteran' context to improve intercultural communications.

- Explore and evaluate methods of civilian community engagement with veterans.

- Explore 'living the moment' as significant for personal identity, self-respect and self-worth.

- More longitudinal and comparative studies of different cohorts of veterans identified in this study.

Section 1: Study Background

1.1 Veterans in North Wales

Approximately 17,000 people leave the UK Armed Forces each year (FiMT, 2017). In 2014, the RBL estimated the size of the UK veteran population at 2.8 million (RBL, 2014) that corresponds to just over 5% of the UK population. According to a recent needs assessment, the number of veterans in North Wales is about 51,000, around 9% of the population aged over 16years (Atenstaedt, 2016). It was also found that one in five veterans have long term health needs related to military service including muscular-skeletal problems and mental health issues. The following data of possible significance when constructing a demographic context for North Wales includes employment, housing and activities. Latest figures on employment (KES 2017) demonstrate a slightly lower rate of 72.5% employment in Wales compared to 74.5% in the rest of the UK. The average house price according to the local Land Registry (2017) is substantially cheaper in Wales compared to the rest of the UK and the gross disposable household income (GDPHI) in North Wales was 87% of the UK average in 2014.

Looking specifically to activities available in the North Wales, it has a clear attraction for those looking for an adventure lifestyle. The North Wales landscape provides for: mountain rambling, rock climbing, abseiling, cave exploring, horse riding, quad biking, canyoning (or gorge-walking) and mountain biking (GoNorthWales, 2017). It also has easy access to sailing, canoeing, windsurfing, fishing and golf. Tourism opportunities have also enabled more adventure activities in the area with: Zip World Velocity, Surf Line Adventures, high ropes courses, go-kart tracks and racing circuits to name a few.

North Wales takes its responsibility to the Armed Forces as a collaborative obligation, demonstrated by the formation of an Armed Forces Forum (NWAFF), which was inaugurated in 2012. All six local authorities have formally made their commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant. The aim of the Forum is to provide a strategic co-ordination for how the veteran and local services can make provision for those who serve and have served in the Military. It meets quarterly and is led by the Chair of the local Health Board and is well attended by representatives from the Local Authorities, Public Health Wales, Ministry of Defence support agencies, such as veteran charities, SSAFA housing authorities, police, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), and the 160th brigade transition community liaison representative and more recently the prison service.

1.2 Influential Policies in Wales

The introduction and consequently the impact of the Armed Forces Covenant, Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014 and the Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015 creates a common foundation on which to build a project which aims to promote collaboration and understanding between communities and the public services. The latter provides a context establishing guardianship and civic engagement for the future generations in Wales. It requires public bodies, who are subject to the Act, to create specific wellbeing goals and work towards

achieving these through shared conversations. These wellbeing goals for Wales are with an expectation that Wales will live and work differently; promoting the involvement of the people in decision–making, utilising a strengths-based approach to assessing needs that requires improved collaborative working. The aim is to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales with public bodies to think more about their long term service provisions, working better with people and communities. The promotion of collaborative working and greater investment in evaluating specific needs of individuals are also key drivers towards achieving the Covenant aims and supporting recommendations laid out in this research. The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve and have served and their families will be treated fairly. The purpose of this report is to help inform how the Covenant is delivered across Wales using the current legislature supporting civic engagement towards improving health and well-being of the community.

1.3 Study Aims

It is well documented that the Armed Forces' way of seeing things is to adopt a structured approach to decision-making. This decision-making is underpinned by an archaeology of military culture, which in turn becomes an intuitive influence on the way situations are viewed. The following study starts with the premise, that to gain a meaningful insight into the veterans' situation requires three aims. The first is to establish a context which can be used as a basis for civilian/veteran understanding of differing perspectives, this is by interpreting ordinary use of language to construct common grounds for initiating a conversation about transition. The second is for the veterans to explain what they see as priority for their successful transition, and the third is for us as researchers to make recommendations on how to action these in a meaningful way.

The first aim was achieved by producing a structure for how the veterans described a collective military identity with reference to influences on a common perspective. Using a similar approach to structure perceptions of the civilian community, common taken for granted expressions were identified as methods for explaining decision-making challenges after leaving the Armed Forces. Thirty veterans were interviewed in open conversation with an opening question of; "can you tell me something about your experiences since leaving the Armed Forces?". Once conversation was initiated the veteran was encouraged to explain more about specific contextual influences on the experience. This revealed how the experience was perceived and a perspective on what was significant in the way aspects of the situation were prioritised. As such, it was possible to reveal intuitive or unconscious decision-making as a narrative identity with reference to a grounded use of ordinary language.

The second aim was to use a group consensus mapping survey to identify resources and capabilities (strengths) veterans would consider important and challenging. The purpose of this was to offer focused recommendations for consideration by policy-makers, service providers and education. Twenty-three veterans participated in the second part of the online stage of the study, they were asked to complete a focus prompt and list as many external and internal resources they could think of. The statements were compiled by the veterans into groups of similarity and orders of importance, then challenge. From analysis of this data, a list of resources considered both important and challenging were identified as 'actionable'.

The data revealed membership of the Armed Forces as an enduring frame of reference influencing decision-making approaches in all situations. While the embedded attributes associated with military identity are commonly valued, it was possible to reveal tensions between the way a veteran may see a situation that the civilian might conventionally see as 'normal'. This is reflected in the model of 'keeping in shape' as a method for describing an approach to 'being' when in the civilian community. It is suggested that without reinforcement of the military context, the veteran faces unpredictability and the messiness of a civilian context. This it is argued can lead to loss of self-worth and collective belonging but can also lead to developing a reflective identity with an understanding of self. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine how this transition can occur but as a social commentary this report reveals some fundamental issues which can form a focus for conversation. Not surprisingly, strengths considered most important for successful transition were, being employable, ability to secure accommodation and a place at a good school for their children. Of significance was the revelation about personal resources considered high priority. These included 'ability to set achievable goals', 'ability to deal with disappointment' and 'ability to endure frustrations and rejections'.

To make this research relevant, the third aim was to consider how the findings from this research could be most effectively turned into actionable recommendations. To do this, we turned to the Capabilities Approach derived from the work of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum[1] to consider a shift from a deficit-based model of evaluating needs. This approach makes the case for greater collaborative work across agencies to enhance the potentials for achievement of well-being. Nussbaum refers to 'combined capability' as a way of addressing social and environmental circumstances that permit and inhibit capabilities for personal well-being. The North Wales Context and current policy drivers provide a strong support for instituting cultural change. Since completing the research there has been an appointment of two Armed Forces Liaison Officers employed across North Wales to improve delivery of the Covenant.

Section 2: Literature

2.1 Search audit trail

The following is a description of how a search of the research literature was conducted and provides an audit trail of relevant studies already undertaken in the field of veteran research. The literature search used EBSCOhost and SAGE with the combination of terms described below leading to a total of 26 articles to review for the study.

1. See Nussbaum Therapy of Desire for an account of formation of self as it commits to the fostering of 'rationality in the self, and in the world as a whole'. That is, basic motivation is to show respect for what is most worthy in oneself, for what is truly oneself...an understanding that one's own capabilities, and not social status, or fortune, or rumour, or accident are in charge of what is important (Nussbaum 1996. 353-54).

Figure 2 Search Audit

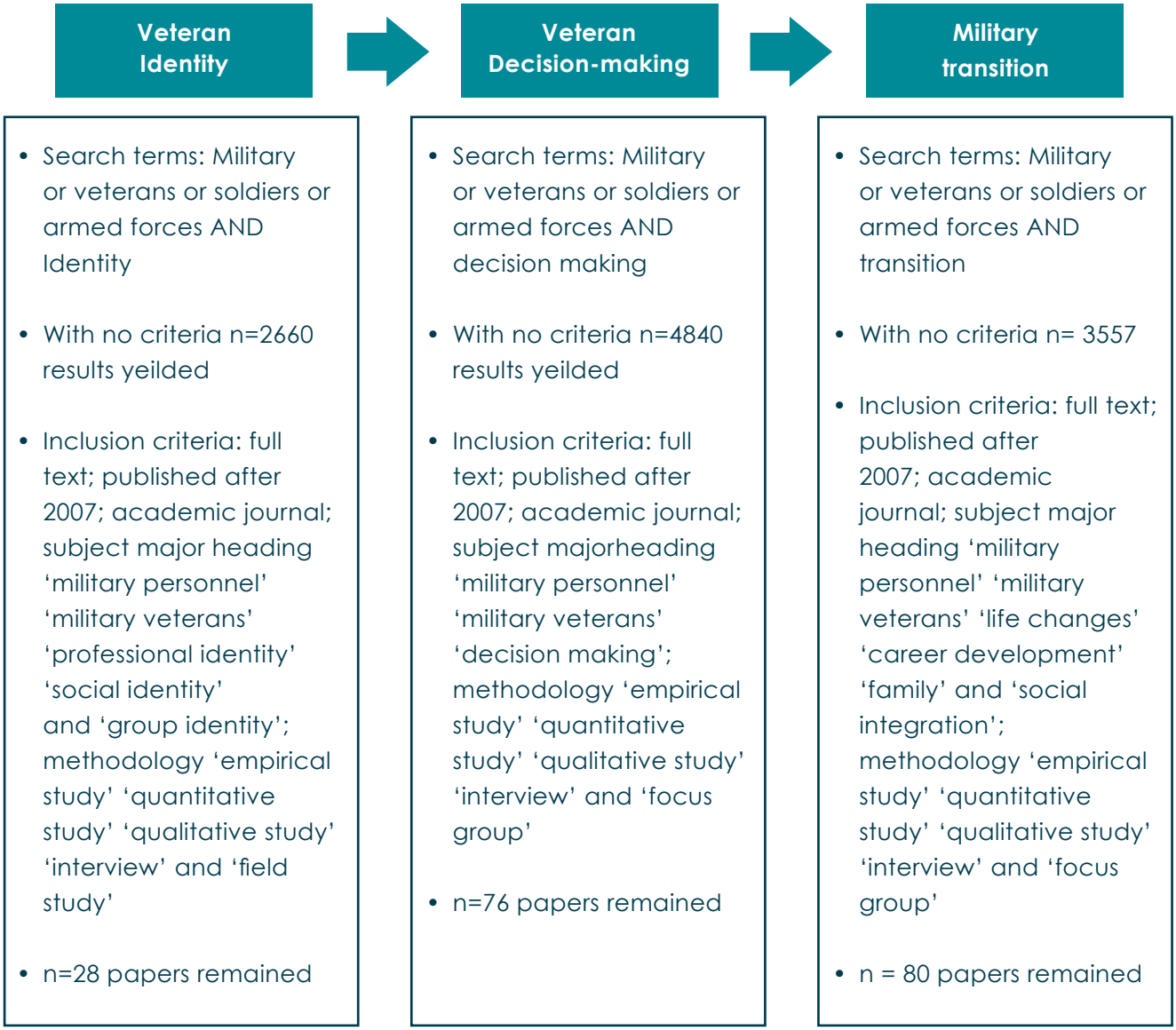
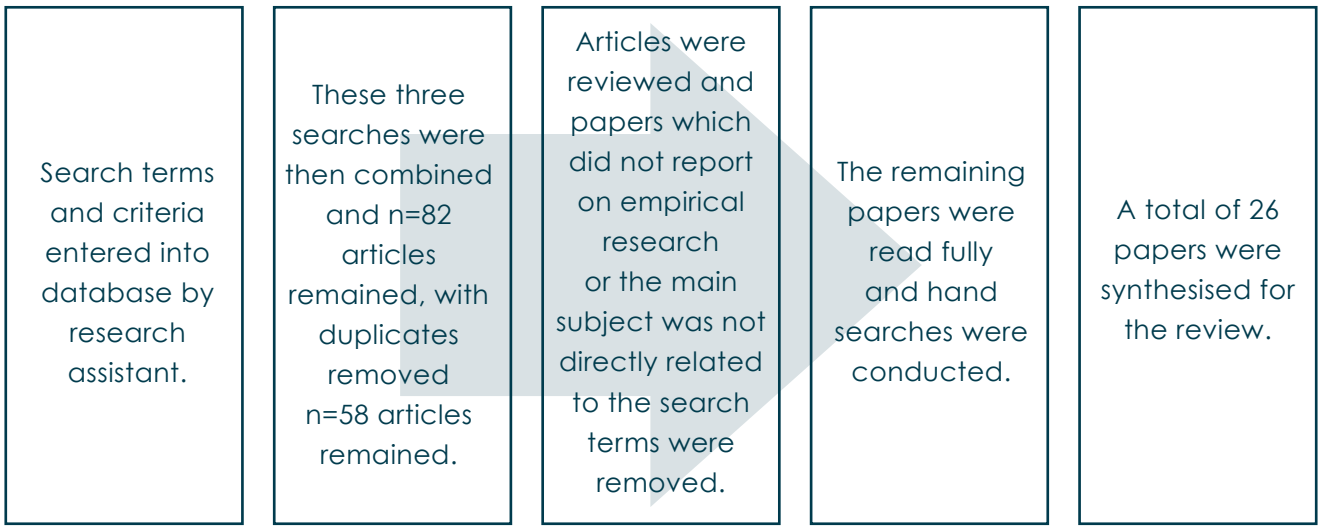


Figure 3 Search Process



2.2 Literature Review

Military Identity

Black and Papile (2010) conducted a survey of 173 Canadian veterans to gather subjective experiences of transition from the Canadian military into civilian life. 62.5% of their participants believed they had made a successful transition with the most important factors for measuring this success were to find satisfying work, followed by achieving mental well-being. Sustaining a relationship with a spouse and experiencing the support of family were also major determinants of how the participants perceived their transition from a military identity. Black and Papile's (2010) study makes links between employment identity, family role and mental health that most civilians could relate to, however, it is apparent from the literature that the process of achieving this successful transition is complex. The following is a review of research that is contributing to knowledge on transition from a military identity in a civilian context. It constructs a debate about the strength of the military culture and its influence on successful transition.

Forming a military identity is commonly described in the literature as a process of 'becoming a warrior' (Brinn & Auerbach, 2015; Brunger et al., 2013; True, Rigg & Butler, 2014; Smith & True, 2014; Woodward & Jenkings, 2011) and is explained as 'breaking down' the individual to sculpt a 'battle ready' warrior. Smith & True, (2014) describe de-individualisation, obedience, chain of command, and dissociation as dominant features of this military identity. In another qualitative study, True, Rigg and Butler (2014) used photo voice to report veterans' accounts of military culture, identifying military cultural norms of stoicism, self-reliance, and prioritizing the needs of the unit over the needs of the individual. They suggest it is these cultural traits are sources of pride and self-respect which when no longer relevant as features of a civilian identity could explain challenges to mental health (True, Rigg & Butler, 2014).

The significance of social context is reinforced constantly in the literature with many researchers (Higate, 2001; Woodward and Jenkings, 2011; Brunger et al., 2013; Ahern et al., 2015; & Grimell et al., 2016) emphasising the strength of social bonds experienced whilst serving in the military. They claim that friendships are formed in the military which epitomise a particular strength of bond that occurs between people who work together with a common purpose. Woodward and Jenkings (2011) refers to these friendships as 'fictive kinship' which they claim are similar to those traditionally experienced through blood ties of family but are formed through shared values and skilled competence. These bonds are reinforced through military membership therefore it is not surprising that loss of this kinship and other 'characteristics of military life' are also the focus for researchers examining why experience of transition would be difficult (Brunger et al., 2013, Ahern et al., 2015, Grimell et al., 2016). As part of Grimmell's (2016) ongoing PhD study, she is exploring the negotiation of self-identity between the civilian sphere and the dominant military sphere. The challenge according to her is for the veteran to reconstruct a new meaningful story of 'who I am as a civilian'. Her analysis offers the view that loss of military 'family' could explain subsequent identity issues due to the inevitable challenge of leaving behind this extraordinary sense of community shared by those serving in the military.

Following exposure to the intensity of a defined military culture and the loss of the potential identity missed out upon as a result of being in the military, Brunger et al., (2013) use the analogy

of being in 'no man's land' as a way to say something about the embodiment of a military identity and returning to civilian life. The researchers discuss how attempts to hold on to such a strong identity during transition can have a detrimental effect on the veteran as differences between military life and civilian life are perpetuated, however, they conclude that losing everything, which embodies this military identity can also lead to a fractured sense of self (Brunger et al., 2013). It is not surprising therefore that employment is considered important for the veteran as it can offer some compensation to what Ahern et al., (2015) describe as loss not only of structure for living but also a loss of purpose. Brunger et al.,(2013) suggest seeking uniformed employment for example in security is a common strategy to overcome a potential identity crisis because the veteran can utilise familiar skills. Other strategies include attempting to reconnect with the former pride and solidarity the military brought to them through drinking with friends, to keep a 'sameness' to their social lives (Brunger et al., 2013). Grimmell (2016) posits that attempting to find meanings and motivation in new civilian life is very challenging for the veteran which is why she makes the suggestion that a 'ready-made' identity of retiree could be seen to be a most helpful way of navigating this transition process.

Reverse culture-shock is the term Koenig et al., (2014) use to describe transition. This they gathered from their in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 17 male and 14 female Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. When talking about transition back to civilian life, veterans described a feeling of disorientation and symptoms compared to what Koenig et al., (2014) describe as the culture shock experienced by overseas travellers revealed by anthropologist Kalervo Oberg in 1960 (Koenig et al.,2014). They highlight the number of cultural symbols and behaviours including wearing uniform, saluting, military discipline, military ranks, strictly hierarchical management structures, use of acronyms and technical terminology, learning to use a weapon and a communal lifestyle to justify why once acculturated into the military, when leaving, veterans have an unexpected experience of not fitting in to the civilian culture. Similar to Grimmell (2013) Koenig et al.,(2014) suggest a need for re-acculturation into the civilian community.

One of the issues raised by researchers however, is the tenuous relationship between civilians and the military with Higate (2001) revealing that although trust within the military is strong, trust is not extended to civilians upon leaving. The notion of trust is used as justification for members of the military 'family', to be considered a resource to help the veteran in the reintegration process (Hinojosa & Hinojosa 2011). Drawing on interviews with 20 male Operation Iraqi Freedom/ Operation Enduring Freedom veterans, the researchers posit inclusivity of membership of those who share a military identity is more compelling than civilian integration. When leaving the military, assumed levels of trust are challenged when engaging with civilians which point to experiences of social exclusion and difficulties with everyday aspects of civilian life. An example used was the dismissal by many potential employers of military training certificates as they were met with phrases like 'this certificate isn't valid here' (Ahern et al., 2015; Koenig et al., 2014). Moreover, Ganzini et al (2013) conducted semi-structured interviews with 34 veterans, who screened positive for suicidal ideation without being previously identified as having issues with mental health. They found that when risk assessments were conducted, particularly in relation to suicide risk, healthcare professionals were perceived as 'just checking the box'. Such a response according to Koenig et al. (2014) could explain the veteran's acute sense of loss of community and camaraderie which was previously taken for granted.

Demers (2011) also interested in the dissonance between military and civilian communities carried out focus groups with serving personnel and veterans who had been on 'active duty'. Findings they suggest point to not knowing 'the rules of the game' about what was considered appropriate behaviour in the civilian culture. When decision making in the military, people were considered predictable and everyone knew what was expected of them, but understanding how to predict the civilian was more ambiguous. Grimmell (2013) suggests that civilian life continues to be filtered through a military lens long after leaving the military supporting Demers (2011) reporting of civilian behaviour as seen to be 'disappointing'. Unstructured protocols for what was acceptable were bewildering and frustrating for the example not knowing what to do when phones were ringing at what they considered inappropriate times or the point of meaningless mundane conversations (Demers, 2011). Similarly, Ahern et al., (2014) interviewed 24 US veterans, discussing challenges encountered upon their return to civilian life they concluded that 'normal' for the civilian is unfamiliar to the veteran and therefore to 'fit in' requires conscious effort. Fitting in was not, however, always the aim of the veteran according to Brunger et al., (2013) with 'bridging the gap' being described as the effort made by veterans whilst maintaining their military identity.

A stronger critique of the civilian community is presented by Brinn and Auerback (2015) who reveal veterans claim experience of judgemental, depreciating, misunderstanding and antithetical attitudes adopted. A view also supported by Ahern et al. (2014) who found that veterans depicted a sense of social exclusion and lack of self-esteem in the civilian community attributed to difficulties accessing support, perceived mistreatment from institutions and difficult relationships with family. Maintaining relationships with spouses and family was a challenge reported from Wilcox et al., (2015) who conducted a quantitative survey with 126 National Guard members who recently returned from a one year deployment to Iraq. Analysis from the survey found that more than 30% of the sample reported difficulties reintegrating into their families and were unhappy with their relationships. This finding was supported by Brockman et al., (2016) who, using self-report data and analysis of videotapes of 184 military service members and their families, concluded that problems with relationships occur when roles are not renegotiated and realigned after deployment and return to the home. They demonstrated examples of experiential avoidance with children and partners associated with reduced positive engagement withdrawal and subsequent distress. They suggest resources of trying to manage their difficulties including attempts to control thoughts, emotions and memories were detrimental to interaction and engagement with their families. Consequently, this points to factors associated with resilience as a resource for adapting to civilian life as having limitations when engaging with close family.

Veterans interviewed by Demers (2011) explained how 'When on deployment 'you can't afford to care' and 'you do what you are trained to do and forced to do for your own survival and survival of your comrades'. These claims he suggests indicate a cultural acceptance of fate with taking risks and being less inclined to worry about the outcomes is a consequence. He supports this notion as a strategy of coping whilst on deployment with reference to participant who said 'You go out each time like it was your last' (Demers, 2011). Demers (2011) also links the experience of being alert in a combat situation and the idea of 'boredom' to explain veterans' risk taking behaviour after leaving the military. This perspective was supported by Verey et al. (2012) who used semi-structured interviews with 15 military personnel returned from active combat, to gain understanding of the process of transition. One of the major themes found by these researchers

was that participants found civilian society to be lacking in real challenge justifying why some engaged in risk-taking behaviour.

Using a broad concept of identity to explore the current literature, the following is a summary of issues which have become apparent. The first is that there is a perception of a military identity which is predicated on two features; a shared community of people with similar values and experiences and that there is a dissonance between this military community and the civilian community. The second issue highlighted is that while employment role, parental or spousal role could offer some structure and purpose to the veteran this could be inadequate to achieve a mental well-being. It is the assumption of this report therefore that navigating transition of identity requires a more comprehensive awareness of features in the civilian culture that could form a basis for building healthier community relations.

Section 3: Research Methods

3.1 Research Methods (Context)

Before the study began, research ethics approval was received from the University's Research Ethics Committee. The first part of the study consisted of individual semi-structured interviews; these began with a general opening question about the participant's experiences of transition. It then funnelled to a more specific focus on conversation that would reveal something about mundane everyday decision-making. The terms of engagement in each of the conversations centred on the researcher not making any assumptions about being a veteran or what it is like to be in the military. The flexible interview structure allowed participants to direct the interview and share personal narratives of their transition experience. It was also anticipated explanations given to the researchers would provide insight into the kind of 'work' they would experience having to do in ordinary civilian conversations. The face-to-face interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours and 10 minutes. They were conducted at convenient locations around North Wales including the University, quiet coffee shops and offices. The participants were also offered to have the interviews conducted through the medium of Welsh if preferred. All participants received an information sheet prior to the interview to detail what the research aims were and what was expected of them should they wish to take part. Consent was confirmed and a form signed by each participant. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

3.2 Research Methods (Concept Mapping)

The second stage of the study methodology was group concept mapping (GCM) which can be described as a mixed method approach for collating data from a large and diverse group of participants. Social researchers have used this methodology for the last three decades as it allows for a statistically sound group consensus to produce a picture or map of the constituent factors of concepts identified by the group (Risisky et al, 2008; Rosas & Kane, 2012). It enables the researchers to gather information about a vested interest in a particular topic of study. There are three stages to this activity 'thought showering', 'unstructured sorting' and 'concept rating'.

The data from these three well-established group processes is then used to create concept maps, which visually depict consensus ideas and provide a prioritised action plan for what the participants would like to happen.

The first step was to develop a 'focus prompt', which is a sentence presented to participants when they sign into the programme. The focus prompt is the prime for the ''thought showering'' activity. The focus prompt used in this research was:

In a community of North Wales, where the successful transition/integration of the ex-service person matters, essential resources include...

Once participants logged into the programme, they saw the focus prompt and were instructed to brain storm their ideas which could 'finish the sentence'. From the analysis of the interviews in stage one, 25 statements were added in response to the focus prompt by the researchers. These included common claims of being able to talk the language; ability to endure frustrations and rejections and having tolerance. Participants could view the responses entered by others and return to the site to add additional responses whilst the 'thought showering' task was still open.

Once the 'thought showering' period closed, there were 60 responses in the programme, contributed to by 19 participants directly and by 30 participant indirectly. The research team reviewed all of the responses generated and removed any duplication, clarified some statements, and separated statements with multiple themes. As a result, 71 statements were presented for the next activity.

Participants who had completed the ''thought showering'' activity were informed over email that the sorting and rating stages were open. Participants could log back into the programme and were instructed to 'sort' the 71 statements under headings of their choice. The participants then 'rated' each statement on a rating scale (1-4), firstly in terms of how important they saw the resource and then in terms of how much of a challenge during transition they considered them.

There were two restrictions on the sorting task and these were that firstly, any statement could not be sorted into more than one pile and secondly, the number of piles had to be less than the number of statements. These instructions were provided in the online programme for participants and they were advised that statements should not be sorted together according to priority or value, they should be sorted together according to similarity in meaning. The ratings scales were firstly 'level of importance' where 1= relatively unimportant, 2= slightly important, 3= moderately important, and 4= very/extremely important; and secondly 'level of challenge' where 1= relatively unchallenging, 2= slightly challenging, 3= moderately challenging, and 4= very/extremely challenging.

Some participants indicated that they preferred to complete the 'unstructured sorting' and 'rating tasks' manually rather than online. This was arranged by the research assistant who met the participant at a mutually convenient location. Using sort cards, where each card had one statement printed on, participants were able to sort these statements into piles and the research assistant recorded which statements were in each pile by documenting the statement numbers. Similarly, the ratings were completed manually using a 'rating sheet' where all the statements were listed and participants could circle 1-4 for each statement, firstly in terms of importance and then in terms of challenge. Participants received instructions verbally from the research assistant but also written on an instructions sheet. The time to perform this activity was approximately 45minutes.

Participants who completed this part of the survey received a £20 voucher as remuneration for their time.

3.3 Recruitment

A snowballing strategy was employed to recruit participants for the semi-structured interviews. The research team distributed posters to members of the steering group, colleagues from the NWAFF and by requesting local shops, cafés, libraries and museums to display the posters. There was a media launch of the project with articles in the local newspaper which also generated interest; the study was also given a profile through an interview conducted for BBC Wales news. A social media network was initiated with the creation of a Twitter page (@VeteransGlyndwr) and a blog was kept throughout the duration of the study. The aim was to raise awareness of the research project, underpin a potential impact strategy and recruit participants. Active recruitment occurred between January 2016 and February 2017.

Recruitment for the second stage of the project, the online survey, began 6 months later. Participants who had taken part in the first stage of the research were contacted first and asked to take part in the second stage; they were sent a link to the programme and instructions from the research assistant on how to complete the activities. Participants were offered a phone call or a meeting if more help was required. Once all the participants from the first stage had been contacted, the research team recruited further participants using a snowballing, and word of mouth recruitment method again.

3.4 Sample

The criteria for inclusion were that the person had been part of the British Armed Forces and had left within the past 5 years and lived in North Wales. After 10 months this criteria was reviewed due to low numbers of responses and the time frame of leaving was increased to 10 years with 3 participants having left over 10years ago (these participants were included because of their enthusiasm to contribute to the project).

The number of participants who participated in the semi-structured interviews was 30 and participants ranged in age from between twenty two and sixty years old; time served in the Armed Forces ranged from between two and twenty seven years; and time since leaving the Forces ranged from less than one year and sixteen years (Appendix 3). The range of reasons

participants claimed to have influenced decision-making to leave the Armed Forces, included wanting to get married, loss of potential for rank promotions, desire to embark on a change of career, pension availability and medical reasons.

The number of participants completed the online survey was 23. The demographic details of these participants are displayed in Appendix 1 on page 67.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Stage 1

The interview data was compiled into one narrative document from which comments and claims that related to decision-making were selected. Analysis of the narrative was an iterative process to gain some means of categorising an interpretation of the data. Once notable examples of decisions were collated, the next stage was to listen for a context which would make influences on these decisions intelligible. This is to draw on the indexicality of language, described by Putnam (1975) as the essential reference to context for linguistic phrases to have meaning. Garfinkel (1984) introduces the notion of anthropological strangeness as an analytic method for researchers that can be used to determine what assumptions would be required for a phrase to be understandable by others. For example, one of the phrases used in this study was 'it's drilled into you', this had resonance for all the veterans in the study because they were able to fill in all the assumptions required for this phrase to be intelligible. More than this, the participants could point to this as indicative of a paradigm or way of seeing things that could be assumed. This paradigm view would be strange for most civilians to comprehend and consequently would not be a context immediately shared as a source for meaning-making.

The analysis started with the premise that these participants would make decisions based on a typical paradigm of influence derived from military membership. The process of transition was therefore an exploration of how this particular worldview was revealed when making both explicit and intuitive decisions in a tentative social interaction with a civilian. The participants explained something about themselves and what they considered the civilian researcher could relate to. Meanings have been made of the language used that are intended to have situated intelligibility for both the civilian and the veteran. This interpretive analysis subscribes to the notion that meaning is not independent of circumstances of its use. Moreover the researcher is assuming a context that would explain the participants' accounts by drawing on common understanding of the indexicality of language use. Three phrases were chosen as providing frames of reference of a military perspective with a further five phrases identified as phrases characterising transition in a civilian context.

3.5.2 Stage 2

The data collected during the online survey was subject to a sequence of multivariate analysis conducted through the Concept Systems Inc. software. The aim was to uncover what the participants considered as prioritised resources for successful transition. The first data to be analysed is the sort data, which is the piles each participant organised the statements into,

based on their judgement of the statements' similarities. The sort data is assorted into a similarity matrix which calculates the number of times each statement was sorted into the same pile by participants and this similarity matrix is the basis for the further analysis.

In order to present a consensus of how the statements were sorted a multi-dimensional scaling was used to create a point map. This point map is a visual representation of the similarity of statements where statements which have been sorted into the same group by participants. The more often they were sorted together, the closer the points were positioned on the map. A hierarchical cluster analysis was then conducted to create a cluster map. Using the point map as the framework, the aim was to produce a single sort which has the best representation of the average participant's sort. Consequently reducing the 71 statements into manageable sub-topics which are a valid representation of how participants organised the statements. The cluster solution decided by the researchers, based upon the content of the clusters and the utility of the map, was an eight cluster solution. The final stage to analysing the cluster map was naming the clusters. The researchers gave each cluster a title using phrases provided by the participants that appeared to reflect the content of the clusters. Next the participants rating data was presented in a cluster rating map with the average participant rating of each statement within a cluster used to generate each cluster layer with the height of the cluster layers being indicative of a higher rating.

Representational validity was estimated through examining the stress value, which reflects the goodness-of-fit, i.e. how well the map fits with the average participant sort. A lower stress value is conventionally considered preferable as this would suggest a better representative fit with a typical participant sort. Consequently, a high stress value would imply a greater discrepancy between the matrix data and the subsequent map; therefore suggesting the map as not representative of a typical participant sort.

Once the core analysis had been conducted, additional analysis was performed, the first being a pattern match. This was a bivariate comparison of cluster average ratings (the importance rating of a cluster compared to the challenge rating of the same cluster), which showed agreement or disagreement between different ratings. Presented as a pattern match it allows the reader to visually detect if there is overall agreement and identify where any specific disagreements could be located. A similar bivariate analysis was conducted to create a 'go-zone' in the form of a map which indicates the most actionable statements in each cluster. These various maps constitute the aggregated ideas of the veterans who participated in the study and provide a utilitarian view of what veterans in North Wales consider as essential for successful transition. It is the view of this report, however, that policy-makers should consider these resources alongside the social commentary provided by the interpretive analysis in the next section.

Section 4: Findings

4.1 Military Identity

Summary of Section: The Military Identity is a standard that all those who have served in the Armed Forces recognise.

4.1.1 "It's drilled into you"

Once having joined the Armed Forces, the recruit is subject to a preparatory process to fulfil the aim of their allocated military role. Every aspect of daily life is managed, with ambiguity of each decision-making situation removed until a pattern of actions is sustained. This behaviour is anticipated to be reliable and consistent with expectations of standard military performance regardless of context. This consistency of performance is enforced by a military legal authority, underpinned by a strong disciplinary infrastructure built on an additional system of laws to which the general population are subject (Gill & Fleck 2015). This disciplinary code of behaviour is reinforced by a hierarchy of potential punitive options, which can be imposed by military police, commanding officers and the prosecuting offices of Courts Martial for most serious offences. As well as this formal imposition of structured behaviour there is an early development of regard for authority with the understanding of power as an opportunity for enacting punishment.

Training starts after the person has arrived at the appropriate basic training barracks. Making a commitment when 'joining' is a core requisite for serving for the military. Stress is placed on 'signing on the dotted line' as a demonstration of making what is seen as a binding contract which as one participant described as 'giving yourself over to the Force'. Identities are established among the recruits during this early stage of training in terms of which regiment the recruit belongs to, what their role is and who their fellow colleagues are. A differential between civilian and recruit is affirmed at this stage by the distribution of uniform, learning of vocabulary, and establishing order to all aspects of daily living:

"you get told when you've got to get up, you get told when you have breakfast, you're told what time you've got to go to work, you told when you've got physical training, and then you get told you've got lunch again….they'll say you're on duty tonight because someone's got sick…. you're always on duty" (22).

We are asked to hear that there is an early realisation that when employed in the military, routine becomes a way of living, moreover, all aspects of daily life are managed and directed by

someone else. Time becomes a standard measure for daily activities with everyone expected to follow the same regime of rest, activity and eating. Learning that duty is not a personal choice but an expectation is also an early lesson of basic training. As another put it in the military 'you live to work not work to live'. Regardless of the age of the recruit the process of basic training is the same for everyone with learning to follow direction without question a demonstration of accepting authority. Being able to distinguish between ranks as a formal hierarchy enables understanding about who is in command:

> *"don't think about it [hierarchy], from a military perspective it is something that is drilled into you…. part of the discipline chain that we all accept." (9)*

This veteran describes a military perspective as a way of seeing things that is not just introduced and encouraged but as he says, is 'drilled into you'. Being part of and accepting the chain of discipline is to make the link between hierarchy and this military perspective which we are to see as not requiring thought. In the military, conventional view is that rank is a measure of recognition that provides a social order. Each person knows the titles of ranks in the discipline chain and therefore who to defer to in the normal hierarchy of respect and authority. The authority of senior ranking as the dominant form of recognition in the military context is to point to the importance placed on promotion as a way of standing out as superior:

> *"There's always going to be someone you don't lie to, always going to be a boss who's a pain but you've got to deal with it and build your emotional resilience." (4)*

Following orders becomes a social norm without challenge or rationale because to test or rebel against the rank would be to undermine the military order of command. Managing personal responses to discipline is part of becoming a member of the military community that would be familiar:

> *"like I'm a grown man…. for instance you couldn't go home until someone had inspected your room, some officer would come and check your room and the officer was younger than me…. I couldn't leave until some young officer come and checked my room" (2)*

This status of legitimate authority of a person over another as a consequence of rank we are asked to accept is reinforced in everyday life.

4.1.2 "Mission command"

To prepare for responding to situations of uncertainty, it was explained that there is a process of decision-making referred to as 'mission command'. It is on exercise and in combat situations that the individual becomes aware of their contribution to the 'whole' when their particular role and part in the mission is recognised as essential. The idea of having a clear decision-making strategy that does not rely on naïve guesswork when responsible for the lives of others is self-evident. When faced with a situation in the military, the officer is expected to be able to identify signs of the enemy or adversary and be able to anticipate or predict the implications of potential actions. The probability of each alternative action is weighed up for its significance, an inventory of resources is taken and risks calculated. Once a problem has been identified it is then incumbent on the officer to draw on knowledge of alternative solutions and calculate the implications of each to determine the optimal option. This is an analytical approach to situations that is familiar to those working in the medical profession as effective for focusing on a problem and determining a plan for implementation. The scope of the particular situation and the range of problems to be navigated is narrowed as commensurate with passing down the order of hierarchy of command:

> *"Mission command is where you tell someone the starting point, where they have to get to, but how you get from there to there is up to you." (4)*

Being told the destination from the start is to map a course of action whilst keeping the mission as the focus. The expectation is that person has options about the process of navigating how to reach the goal but the outcome is not negotiable it is commanded.
Resources considered valuable in the military are those which contribute to the success of the whole operation. Inevitably in a combat situation there is an expectation that each member will do their bit as one participant said 'you don't want a guy struggling at the back when you have to pick up things and run'. As this participant describes:

> *"Fitness and physical strength was an outward perception you could show you were good at your job and could potentially get you promoted" (18)*

Whilst not everyone in the military could be acknowledged to be as fit as they 'should be' it would expected that each person could 'pull their weight' and not endanger those they are with. Reliability therefore to get things right in the military is not left to chance:

"we have done it so many times I know what is expected of me… that's what we want… because we know exactly every eventuality" (19)

Repetitiveness is described as essential for becoming reliable in the skills required of the job. Demonstrating expertise in a delegated role and undertaking tasks with skill that cannot be explained would not be uncommon for the veteran accounting their experience in the military:

"this officer decided this was the place we were going to go, so there we were and I had the pressures of making the communications work … it was like what a responsibility to put on a young guy kinda thing, but obviously I'm still here, so it worked and I pulled it off … I don't know how I made it work, I can't explain it, I look back and think how did it work and I have no idea, it just worked" (6)

Here this participant describes being in a situation, which he is sharing on the understanding that the civilian is willing and able to imagine the potential dangers in this situation. He also wants the civilian to understand what he is attempting to convey about the pressures he is referring to. The officer is reliant on him not getting anything wrong as to do so would not just be inconvenient it could increase the possibility of harm to someone, himself included. Being in such a situation he is asking us to suppose, would be stressful for any normal person, never mind someone of a young age. To emphasise the point of this account he describes that although he was young and one could assume frightened he still managed to perform the task required of him. This responsible task required skilled competence which we are asked to hear, he managed without thinking. He was therefore able to perform competently, demonstrating skill in his use of technical equipment, in a dangerous and stressful situation. This account is a demonstration of a competent member of the military who wants to convey something about the link between intuitive performance and staying alive.

As another participant explained being on operations you needed to be 'alert to everything' using whatever means available to avoid being caught. This was described by reference to breaking the rules in ways that would be seen as demonstrating initiative:

"You're always ducking and diving to get out of the shit. Especially because every service man aspires to be promoted to the next rank" (12)

'Playing the game' once familiar with the rules of membership is to know when it would be possible to 'get away with' bending or playing with the rules. Seen as a measure of competence and respected by others, it would be recognised that those who mastered the more implicit 'rules' of not 'getting caught out' would often be those who made promotion. Ultimately, it is anticipated that competent membership of the military is demonstrated when each person knows what is expected of them:

> *"I know what is expected of me and that's great that's what we want because we know when shit hits the fan you do this, which allows the commander the time to work out the plan to say we've got these options and this is my best option so when you go on operations you are nailed to the ground" (25)*

As this participant describes, knowing what is expected of him means that situations can be addressed with composure even when things get difficult. He asks us to grasp that it is because of careful preparation and a clear chain of command that such situations are not chaotic. There is a person in charge or the commander, who can make decisions. It is he or indeed she who makes a plan, determines the alternative options for the outcome of the operation to be fulfilled. Being 'nailed to the ground' is to suggest there is no prospect of wandering or straying from the expectations. The aim of this analytical method of decision-making is with the attempt to avoid uncertainty, make most efficient use of resources and ensure an outcome is achieved. Having a plan and calculated options would point to mission command as predicated on gaining control over the situation to follow an ordered process to achieve a prescribed outcome.

4.1.3 "We have each other's back"

As described earlier, when signing up for the military there is a period of training which is particularly intense with challenges that are intended to bring the recruits together as a 'unit'. As well as wearing the same clothes, living in the same accommodation, the recruits share personal experiences that become unique to those who were there:

> *"The Armed Forces then become your family because you are working with these guys and girls, you have your meals, you're playing sport with them and you're socialising with them and you live with them, you are around these people 24/7 days a week you know and so you build up that camaraderie." (22)*

The aim of building a collective is to strengthen the groups' ability to work together when on 'operations'. As one participant explained you 'live in each other's pockets', 'teamwork' through exercise and sport is intended to encourage competitiveness but also to value the contribution each member makes to the whole. Furthermore, this 'unit' of people become interdependent relying on developing assumptions about each other that leads to a placement of trust based on shared membership. The family is used as a way to explain this closeness that would be widely recognised by other members of the Armed Forces:

> *"in the Forces we had each other's backs we knew where we were every-day, we had the structure." (25)*

Placing trust, as described here, would not merely be a necessity of circumstance it is described as having each other's back in everyday living that did not require conscious decision-making. Knowing this supporting structure would be there everyday would point to a reliability about another person that might never have been experienced by some civilians. The notion of 'bonding' is a currency repeatedly used to emphasise the justification for other members of the military to be seen as more than the kind of work colleague that would be expected in civilian life:

> *"you develop a stronger bond … just in terms of keeping things together like mentally and physically … " (8)*

The strong bond is described as a reason for why this person saw himself keeping things together. He makes the reference to mental and physical resources as if structures that could be held together. The 'bond' is for us to hear as somehow responsible for preventing what could be interpreted as a breakdown or collapse. The link between this bond or family unit and keeping shape as a trustworthy, reliable person would point to the importance of bonding as a contribution to well-being:

> *"you've got to be able to trust that person is going to protect you as much as you will protect them… it is like a family. These people cry with you if an incident has occurred… you sleep with them, you eat with them, it is a family unit." (22)*

Trust is described here as an unchallenged assumption influenced by the possibility of needing to be protected. He is suggesting that there is a mutual reliance on other members of the family to do what would be necessary to protect each other. That this is equal and balanced is shown by the explanation that it was okay to share with these people an emotional response to an incident. There is an intimacy in sleeping and eating with others that points to similarities with

family relations, living in close proximity and knowing the others everyday personal behaviours and characteristics. As well as the individual relations, a collective approach to the 'unit' and regiment could be a structure for reinforcing bonding:

> *"even in basic training, they will come out and they will have complete belief that their regiment is the best one and they should do everything they can to maintain that and you will find that commanding officers will be more upset with offences that are attributed to the regiment and they are not overly concerned with the individual but with the regiment's reputation" (18)*

The commanding officer here is described as becoming upset if the reputation of his regiment could be harmed by one its members. This account is aimed to explain to the civilian about the importance placed on joint responsibility for the standing of the membership group. It is a demonstration of loyalty where the collective is of more significance than the person.

The following is a schematic representation of features characterising the Military Perspective and which provide a model of influence on everyday decision-making once having left the Armed Forces.

Figure 4 Military Perspective

Mission Command	Drilled into you	Have each other's back
Focus on objective/ endpoint/outcome Reliance on predictability and competence Skills: Endurance Adaptability Efficiency To not get caught	Understanding of rank and structured heirarchy Understanding of order, authority and discipline Military obligations over personal	Know what unconditional trust and reliability looks like Shared experience of laughter, distress and fear Experienced collective strength of membership

4.2 Becoming a Civilian

The following section of the report is a review of accounts of experiences since leaving the Armed Forces. It is presented under five subheadings reflecting common paradigm views of transition as a common context for decision-making. The first is 'moving forward' revealing tensions between confidence and apprehension about how maintain or improve standing or status on leaving the Armed Forces. It is typified by reference to valuing some control over the future in the face of uncertainty. It is also evident by accounts of personal competitiveness about promotion or measures of achievement. The second is 'changing pace' as conscious decision-making when facing the challenge of not having a clear mission, learning to compromise previous 'norms' and coming to terms with competing priorities of wanting to 'fit in' and 'staying in shape'. The third is 'putting down roots' as the re-negotiation of relationships without moving as a military obligation. The fourth is 'living the moment' or experiencing the thrill of competent unconscious performance, it is made evident by accounts of letting go and well-being. The final is 'being a veteran' and coming to terms with veteran identity as a standard for engaging with the civilian community.

4.2.1 "Moving forward"

With such a strong identity developed from enculturation of the military perspective it is not surprising that when leaving the Armed Forces there were many claims of transition as 'life changing'. Moving forward would be a common phrase to demonstrate optimism, or to present an attitude towards wanting to make a success of opportunities in transition:

> *"I knew what my plan a was, I had a plan b and for plan c I could do a bit of back pedalling and work and stay where I am so I was in full control. The military were fully supportive because I was so clear in what I was doing" (4)*

This participant describes his transition as a controlled event because it was underpinned by his familiarity with planning and preparing for potential eventualities. He would want us to see that from where he is, there is a clear vision and direction, which could as he says, be 'back pedalled' to allow him to review and prepare an alternative route if required. The military, he describes, were fully supportive because he was clear about his intended outcome.

Information, direction and advice available in the form of a package, as another participant explains, would be dependent on the person's number of years' service. Motivation to access these resources however sometimes requires encouragement:

"there is a set process that you go through it is 'seven clicks to freedom'... and they kind of authorised my intention to leave and then in order to access to your resettlement... you need to attend certain briefings, personally it's been useful...have I had a job offer yet? No " (7)

Transition preparation is described here by one veteran as a process, which without the benefit of insight into its value, is seen as a series of steps to be taken before exiting the military. We are asked to hear that attending briefings and workshops are useful but the measure of success of this preparation is the offer of a job. Of primary concern for those leaving the Armed Forces was the financial security gained from an income. Rather than speculate on alternative career choices, risk of unemployment could be reduced by approaching other members of the Armed Forces to work in an environment where there was a predictive certainty about expectations of them:

"I came out and started working, we had PT every morning and my boss was an ex-sergeant-major" (29)

Coming out and starting work was commonly considered amongst the participants to be an early indication of successful transition. Knowing what an employer would expect in terms of performance, skills and discipline is commonly addressed by choosing to work with others who are ex-military. This could mean working 'away' 'in security' or for one of the uniformed services, employment that could be justified as moving forward because either the large salary or the respected status that comes with the ready-made identity associated with the uniformed services. Another rationale for seeking employment within companies and organisations that explicitly claim to be 'pro-veterans' was to seek positions without having to provide too many explanations and where there was potential for promotion:

"... they don't demilitarise us because the people working for career transition partnerships are ex-military" (20)

De-militarisation was not a priority discussed by the participants as this was not anticipated to be a problem in view of the resources gained as being a member of the Armed Forces. De-militarising was explained by another participant as merely 'learning to adapt'; however, preparing for employment opportunities in civilian life could be made challenging when advised by other people with a military perspective. Moving forward was therefore commonly viewed by participants as exercising their acquired military resources within a different environment. Not all who leave the Armed Forces choose to remain in what could reasonably be described as a 'comfort zone'. Challenge of being one's own boss even if the employ would be to use familiar

skills offers the prospect of not having to be responsible to a civilian employer or work with others who would be unlikely to have a similar approach to work.

As the following participant explains, doing what you are told can be an effective way of standing out in a civilian environment:

> *"there is the joke in the office at the moment because I am very straightforward if I get told to do something it gets done, they don't have to ask me twice and they will give me a timeline and I will go in earlier I will make sure that it's done" (1)*

This participant is asking us to hear that he is comfortable to be the object of a joke in the office of civilians where he is working. This is because he is 'straightforward', that is, when instructed to do something it will get done and without prompt. Moreover, when given a timeline, he will demonstrate a competitiveness with himself that he assumes the other people in the office find amusing. It is for us to hear that this action is out of the ordinary in the civilian office and could be viewed with irony by his work colleagues. The link between his diligence and identity in the workplace provides a context of irony that the civilian would recognise as contradictory to what is normal of an employee. This acceptance of being the butt of humour by standing out for being efficient or particularly diligent was a recurrent topic within descriptions of experience:

> *"I can't have messy paperwork, so they always laugh at me because I use a ruler when I do my forms; I have two in my pocket, a small one and one that folds in half" (6)*

Lack of tolerance for messy paperwork is the rationale this participant is asking for us to accept why people would laugh at him. That he chooses to carry a ruler around in his pocket is his way to express the link between his attentions to detail in the workplace as a demonstration that he is not moving backward in his approach to a work task. As such his military perspective influences implicit aspiration to improve performance and be acknowledged for this.

Navigating civilian employment criteria would be problematic if the language of experience is not recognised by employers. It is considered by some that moving forward with employment could be resolved if applications could be written for civilians to recognise:

"I've got a lot of experience but not civilian recognised qualifications…. So I'm doing a course that will convert all my experiences into civilian qualifications."(5)

Doing a course was for this participant a way of converting his military experiences into civilian qualifications. The notion of qualifications as a passport to employment is commonly held and them not being the answer to navigating the complexity of the world of civilian employment would sometimes difficult to admit:

"if you don't understand something that a 19 year old understands it's hard to go…. can you explain this to me it's just unthinkable, you would find ways around it"(19)

As this participant describes, in the military, he would not normally ask a 19 year old to explain something that he believes he should know. He is wanting to point out that he has strategies or ways for avoiding admitting not understanding something. Asking questions would be 'unthinkable', a demonstration of uncertainty that would not be acceptable in a ranked position of authority. Acknowledging 'not knowing' something assumed to be known by others in the civilian context could be considered as hindering moving forward.

Accounts of wanting to pursue a new career that would challenge the need for new skills pointed to transition not seen as merely changing from one job to another:

"I knew I had the best job I would ever have in my life in the Forces because that's the way it was but it had come to its natural end for me so anything after that would never be as good so I knew I was going to take a hit in something but that jobs that were being passed around operational manager this and security manager that blah blah I just thought it just didn't really ….I needed something to spark my motivation" (2)

The usual jobs being passed around that he would be able to do were not ones he saw as sparking his motivation even though the work would be familiar. Doing something completely different is a challenge that for some could mean looking to experience a paradigm shift:

"it was at that point, at 14 years of service I felt, after a long period of discussion with reflection and seeing what I was suited to, I decided to go into social work." (4)

Taking such a change of direction according to this participant was after a long period of discussion and reflection. This would point to what another described as 'getting your head in the right shape' that is to engage in some form of dialogue to develop insight into personal motivations, anxieties, strengths and weaknesses. A conventional approach to gain understanding about what employment opportunities would be best to exploit and how.

The above account provides a commentary on some of the tensions experienced when leaving the Armed Forces and navigating the civilian community as workplace opportunity. It highlights some of the characteristic challenges of making decisions about whether to stay within a comfort zone of familiarity, assert a presence within a civilian environment or attempt to engage in a paradigm shift to see the workplace as less of a competitive environment than one that is a source of personal fulfilment. Moving forward reflects a common optimism about leaving the military seen as an opportunity. For those who chose to stay in a military environment staying in shape is made much easier than for those who either try to translate their qualifications and experiences or who want to find something that challenges this identity. For some who find work in a civilian workplace where familiar structures are absent, keeping in shape can be an effective way to fit in whilst standing out. A paradigm shift towards what could be a change in perspective towards making a living is an issue that is not easily achieved.

4.2.2 "Changing pace"

Life in the military is described as filled with activity and close social relations with other members of the Armed Forces. The civilian world represents a radical difference in pace to that experienced within the military Once having left the military there is a challenge about what to do with time and how to manage slipping into time or 'fitting in' with civilians not familiar with the military context. Lack of structure and freedom of choice for how time could be managed can be a source of frustration. Furthermore, day to day life seen as without purpose or meaningful direction is a challenge to personal motivation.

This was reflected in accounts by participants who were explaining coming to terms with the freedom to be his or her self when not familiar with the rules of social custom:

"because you are kind of dragged around in the army, if you don't want to do something the chances are someone's making you do it … you don't have any freedom and once you do have freedom you don't know what to do with it." (27)

This participant wants us to hear that in the military the person can sometimes require to be passive in their decision-making. Freedom here, as he explains, allows choices, this can include both things we want to do and those we would prefer not to do. Justification for suggesting freedom of choice is unfamiliar is by reference to being in the army. Freedom as civilians is something that is taken-for-granted therefore developing choices about what we want, what we need and what we don't want to do is often a process of trial and error or by relying on guidance from a respected other. Knowing what to do with freedom once we have it was a subject of conversation for many of the participants. As this participant explains keeping a foot in both camps can be a compromise:

> *"I joined the reserves and the reason behind that is that that gives me a little incentive to keep ticking over." (2)*

Rather than leaving the military completely this participant describes wanting to 'keep ticking over'. This could reasonably be seen as a way to seek motivation from military whilst managing a change in pace of the civilian life. It is also describing the military reserves as a method for preventing switching off or remaining active without too much exertion. Joining the military reserves would be a common decision for those who were able to meet the recruitment criteria. Some participants saw educational opportunities as a way of keeping busy whilst developing options for potential civilian careers:

> *"I have been doing about 12 different courses over the past year. I think I have replaced going on operational tour, putting myself in the firing line and the little element of danger for how much stuff can I put on my plate and deal with, I have exchanged one form of excitement for the other. If there's no pressure it's not fun, I've replaced one pressure and stressor for another." (25)*

This participant is asking for us to consider 'taking courses' as a way of creating pressure for himself. He is pointing to his familiarity with experiencing the need to respond to the expectations of others as a rationale for why doing these courses would be seen as a reasonable alternative to going on operational tour and experiencing stress. He is also making a link between pressure and excitement that would not be immediately familiar to the civilian student describing their experience of studying for a course. Another claim unlikely to be shared amongst the civilian student population was the account of a participant describing his three year degree:

"this three year course has been the easiest three years of my life, it has been so slow paced… it feels like a one year course dragged across three… I have a piece of work which has to be in for 12 tomorrow and I haven't even started that one… I think I would have dropped out and got bored if I hadn't done all the other stuff as well." (4)

According to him this degree course has been the easiest three years of his life. He describes choosing to wait before starting an assignment as a way of pointing to meeting a deadline as not a problem for him. That he has other stuff that he has done as well as his degree course is for us to see filling of time as a way to avoid boredom. The 'overstretching' of himself by finding more tasks than would be reasonable, was common amongst the participants who explained anxiety about not wanting to 'sit still'. Even so, there were participants who chose to spend time without an agenda:

"simply having a dog, we can just go out for a walk and fresh air and stuff like that. It's just, just a different pace." (9)

This person describes simply walking the dog and having fresh air being of value, this is not an activity with a specific purpose but a way of spending time that reflects a change of pace to what he was familiar with. The 'passing of time' without a direct objective was considered by many as a 'waste' of time.

Other accounts of choosing to 'live in a tent' or 'on the beach' in this country would not conventionally be deemed a reasonable way for avoiding being told what to do or where to go. Choosing to keep 'myself to myself' or 'keep my head down' however, were often explained as strategies for avoiding upsetting people or 'saying the wrong thing'. Conversations in a civilian social environment were often described as difficult because of language differences that could lead to their 'banter' resulting in people 'taking offence'. Having clear views and strong opinions would be consciously managed by the participants when describing their experiences:

"I am not completely militarised, I've had one posting in a circular barbed wire, I let stuff slip, which I probably shouldn't let slip, it is just my opinion, but it's close to the mark sometimes, I think I better not say that. I am so careful about trying not to upset people because is not in my nature to that but … I'm used to very hard and fast fixed rules so I'm going to have to learn to relax my style." (9)

This participant describes not being 'completely militarised', the reference to the barbed wire would be one other military people would recognise as referring to having spent time and participated in a conflict situation. It is possible to hear the tensions between not wanting to upset people and letting things slip that are 'close to the mark'. This unintentional potential for harm of others is suggested as a result of being used to 'rules' that are not flexible. It is at odds with the nature of this person to want to upset someone, however, it is implied that being militarised and used to hard and fast rules is a justification why this sometimes can happen. As the following participant claims when aware of the work required to not upset people it can be a challenge:

> *"It's like walking on egg shells you never know how far you can go until you start upsetting somebody, we 'have to conform to the social norms'. But we had no social norms" (25)*

Social norms are conventionally referred to as guidelines, rules or boundaries assumed by civilians and to which they conform as standards about what is acceptable behaviour. 'Walking on egg shells' is conveying what is seen as a tension between conscious performance and an intuitive way of being. Not overstepping boundaries of social norms in a civilian context requires conscious effort. It would only by assessing or evaluating the responses of the other person that it becomes evident how far would be reasonable to push these boundaries of what was acceptable. Accounts of being an outsider were typical amongst the participants with some even describing conversations with civilians as alien experiences:

> *"so we would start with football that's a safe one, so you know blokey conversations … then some people did push it further asking questions but I didn't really talk too much about what I did because I knew 'been here, done that, had to do this', would be completely alien so after I realised that well really people don't know what you are talking about, you think why bother, just keep it nice and simple" (2)*

Starting conversations with civilians was a calculated exercise for this participant with conscious efforts to choose a topic that would offer common ground to continue engaging. It could be heard that knowing the other would not have the frame of reference for a particular topic of conversation could lead to the need for different strategies to be adopted. To keep conversations simple, allowing the other person to make contributions would be one effective strategy. This was not always the case with some participants being less compromising:

"I've always had a good sense of humour, I've always been a joker, even if it's a bad situation I'll always have a joke and I've not changed who I am it's the way I am and it's the way I deal with situations I've always been the same really, banter isn't it. but some people take offence because they don't know how to take my sense of humour." (18)

Humour is a feature of most conversations, with many accounts of how 'dark' the humour could be in the military. As this participant explains knowing how to take humour can be a challenge because what could be seen as amusing by one person could be considered offensive by another. Here, a link is being made between being a joker and identity, not changing identity and some people take offence is therefore irresolvable. For this participant his banter is linked to his identity and it is for us to hear that while some people take offence it is they who are responding this way. He is also making the point that this humour is also linked to dealing with situations even if they are bad. It is for us to see that this participant is suggesting it is beyond his control to prevent people taking offence therefore it is up to the other to know how to react.
It was common to refer to injury or compromise to previous health and fitness as an explanation for changing pace:

"Yeah I need to live near the sea ... It's a good place to get a peace of mind if you want to spend some time alone… I usually go climbing, well I say climbing but I can't go climbing properly these days because of my wrist." (27)

This participant describes how spending time alone and living near the sea is linked to his 'peace of mind'. In the same explanation referring to climbing as something that would usually be done but no longer possible because of injury points to frustration about limitations experienced on leaving the military. The need to compromise about how time could be spent was a recurrent issue for those with medical diagnoses, with activities with a purpose seen as those most favoured:

"as soon as everything that's needs sorting is sorted, I get tattoo's and piercings. Yeah I booked another one in today… £100 for two hours… he's really good…we talk" (16)

This participant describes sorting everything as a reference to meeting his financial obligations before booking two hours to have a tattoo done, this he describes has become a regular or usual way of spending his free time. Having his body decorated and pierced is, he would ask us to

hear, a reasonable way for him to spend his money and time. It was not just the tattoo that was of significance for this participant but the time he would be spending with the tattooist who is providing him with personal and undivided attention.

Changing pace is a strategy for revealing tensions experienced when making decisions that involve managing free time. It reveals influences of military 'norms' by reference to usually being occupied with a purpose. It also points to challenges posed by social interactions with people who may not be viewed with the same unconditional trust as afforded to colleagues in the military. It also highlights the challenges when interacting with civilians who do not appear to have frames of reference from which to interpret accounts of military experience. Changing pace explains how the ex-service person sees a difference in the slower pace of the civilian community.

4.2.3 "Putting down roots"

Putting down roots was a recurrent topic of conversation about transition as no longer anticipating what is commonly associated with moving house and home. For those with families this is related to children's schools, friends and partner's employment. For those who were single, putting down roots is a reference to stability of friends and relatives being nearby. Putting down roots is commonly used in civilian conversation with family in mind and with an understanding of stable foundations for a partner and children as a measure of being a good spouse or parent. While benefits of moving with the family whilst in the Armed Forces included accounts of opportunities for 'meeting people from different cultures' and encouraging children to not be 'narrow minded'; an assumption is made about a parent wanting to put down roots as being a good thing:

> *"we have had I think in 14 years up to that point we'd had 9 houses ….I can put some roots down at long last for the kids my eldest has just turned 16 and had his results now and the idea was to get out before he hit exam time to give him some continuity" (2)*

We are asked to hear that to have 9 houses in 14 years is acknowledged as outside normal convention. He describes that 'at long last', putting down roots would be made possible because of leaving the Armed Forces. He makes the point that a child's education is important and that he sees the need to provide 'continuity' or stability. He references his eldest child's exams as an influence on his decision-making. Rationales for securing accommodation were close to schools, wanting to live 'in a village', 'in the hills' 'by the sea' or 'have family nearby' most civilians would recognise. However, acknowledgement that choices about houses were often regarding function and left to partners to organise:

"I never even saw the house and you know she [my wife] was there went forward, and she was on the phone to me literally saying you sure because you've never seen it, I said has it got walls and a roof? That's the kind of thing that's how we work it is complete trust sort of thing"(1)

This participant describes his wife putting an offer on a house that he had not even seen. His inquiry of whether the house had walls and a roof, was for us to hear his conditional trust in his wife's decision-making about such a significant purchase. Buying a house for most civilians is an investment that can involve many considerations however, because of the relationship he has with his wife, he expresses his confidence in his detachment from the purchase. Reliance on partners was notable with many accounts pointing to expectations of the wife to 'deal with family things' and 'control the purse strings'. Putting down roots was commonly explained by reference to family with many describing the choice as a concession to a partner:

"Tying myself to a geographic area… My wife's family is here and that's why we settled here…I'm not totally alien to the area but it is largely [my wife's] choice we were looking for a forever home" (7)

This sentiment of 'tying' himself to an area would demonstrate deferral to a partner as to be seen as reasonable. The notion of a 'forever' home reflects what in civilian terms could be seen as a romanticised view of a home that could become a place of permanence. Other examples of explicit intentions to prioritise the family by 'putting them first' were accounts of buying a 'family car', 'spending time with the family' and getting involved in school sports:

"I help out at sports day, my boys' football club and I get quite a lot of satisfaction from seeing kids developing relationships and improve" (3)

Helping out in sports and encouraging children to participate in activities was acknowledged as a priority for being a parent that many civilians would relate to. As the following participant describes, however, being a parent with a military background, it is sometimes necessary to compromise expectations when with the family:

"[the family and I] have just been to Llanberis camping and well my family are not really sort of like rough campers not that way. We have to have electricity there etc etc. and we do clash because obviously I am quite used to just getting on with it, but obviously you have to be a bit more sensible" (2)

Camping is something that we are to accept as an ex member of the Armed Forces is very familiar to him. It would be normal therefore for him to make reference to his family not being 'rough' campers even though they were in countryside of Llanberis. This clarification is necessary because of his assumption that it is more common for civilian campers to have electricity and other resources that would make camping more comfortable. He wants us to hear that doing what he would like to do, and doing what he knows he should, is a source of conflict for his decision-making. This clash is resolved by him explaining that becoming a 'bit more sensible' is obviously what he must do. There were other accounts of adapting to prioritising roles as spouse, parent and neighbour in the civilian context that could be seen as challenging:

"One of the rhythms of life when you know you're going to go away not just on tours on exercises too. I was 18 years married in the Forces, and on operation and going away there was about 9 and a half years of me being away and when you come out you are 24/7 together. So there is not an operation when I think we all do it… I'm stressed I've got lots to do and my wife keeps telling me to do this stuff and you're thinking 'in three weeks-time it's not going to matter'." (19)

Going away on tour or exercise is part of the rhythm of life in the Armed Forces, this is not something that can be negotiated and is to be accepted without question. As this participant explains there are many stresses of things that need to be done around the house but these things are not a priority when in the military because responding to duty will always take precedent. Coming to terms with dealing with consequences of putting down roots as a member of the civilian community would reveal a conflict in changing priorities. Living with a partner as a civilian could be shown as challenges when different perspectives are revealed in the mundanity of everyday situations:

"So now I'm home, hoping to be asleep by 9.00pm but I'm still up by 6.00am to train, she's watching tele, watching big brother and all that crap and I'm getting all fidgety and sometimes an argument would blow up because she's used to that, used to having her space her own way and I'm used to having mine. It might sound tiny little things… I'm having to do all the chores around the house… back in the real world" (20)

Being home and sharing space is a challenge for this participant who describes his priorities of what matters as differing from his partner. He refers to being 'back in the real world' as a rationale for having to do all the chores around the house. He is assuming that the interlocutor would understand that tensions can arise when living with someone who prefers to watch television rather than go to sleep at 9pm to be up to train at 6am. He also wants to alert us to hear that he is doing all the chores around the house because that is what is expected of a good partner:

Putting down roots was a method for making evident some of the challenges associated with prioritising a family and home after leaving the Armed Forces. It reveals influences of the military perspective as associated with 'moving' being a social norm. It was also possible to hear tensions experienced between adopting the role of partner and parent as a frame of reference identity within a civilian context and living with work colleagues in the military. The role expectations of parent or partner although familiar, required compromises to previously respected resources of competitiveness, efficiency and emotional resilience when in the ordinary circumstances of the family home environment.

4.2.4 "Living the moment"

Living the moment was a phrase used by one participant describing 'being in the zone' when in a combat situation and experiencing all the emotions associated with a heightened sense of alertness. It was subsequently used as a frame of reference to explain what this could look like in the civilian context. There were many examples of how to 'live the moment' pointed to ways of creating situations that would be out of the ordinary for most civilians. As this participant describes:

"living for the moment, it's risk-taking when you're in an environment that's scares the bejesus out of you on a daily basis but your supported by your mates. You could be killed because you've seen that happen so that becomes your way of life it becomes your way of life down to the risk-taking and drinking to excess"(19)

Risk taking in an environment in which you are scared and you could be killed is not common amongst the civilian population. This participant describes being supported by his mates in this risk taking, that seeing people be killed is something real and could happen. He makes the claim that this risk taking becomes a way of life. Moreover, he is asking us to hear that whilst drinking alcohol could be a familiar activity for others outside the military, it is drinking to excess and its link to unconscious performance that is different. Drinking alcohol was acknowledged as a common part of social life in the military:

> *"if you see a guy having problems you support him, you get drunk, fight, sorted. Drunk fight kebab, good night and normally that will give you a chance to talk about it… it's what's known as decompression." (25)*

Here this participant describes how to help a military colleague talk about his problems is to get drunk, the idea is that the alcohol acts as a way for the person to equalise or readjust to normal surroundings. We are asked to assume that this practice is reasonable for people who have problems talking. That is the creation of an environment in which the person can be him or herself without censor or self-control is an opportunity for unconscious performance. Similarly, being amongst others who have familiar frames of reference allows a 'letting go' that is an escape from keeping shape:

"some people go to the support groups just to have the banter, that black humour, because the civvy's don't get it and they want that military thing" (23)

Having mates to talk to was considered important as the above participant explains, however, it is only people who have the black humour that comes from a collective experience that make it supportive. The 'military thing' is something that he explains as civilians not understanding. Banter comes from a sharing of shorthand language underpinned by an archaeology of assumptions. This allows an authenticity of emotional expression that would only be recognised by other military members. As another participant explains:

"if you're in a firefight you can be actually tingling with adrenaline and you just start crying with laughter because a mate got shot in the foot, in hindsight it's not normal but that's how we dealt with it" (13)

Crying with laughter because a friend has been shot in the foot would not be seen as a normal response in most civilian company. He recognises this and explains this emotional reaction against the context of 'tingling with adrenaline'. Dealing with horror and fear through laughter or humour in a situation is difficult to justify if someone is really in pain and suffering. It is therefore reasonable to acknowledge the likely discomfort of the civilian who may have the frame of reference to be judgemental. That is without the rich background context of the military perspective there could be the possibility of these emotional responses being seen as abnormal. Living the moment was also associated with using military competence in civilian risk taking activities as the following participant explains:

"it makes you feel good by going on a lifeboat, one minute you're painting the door and the next minute you're thrashing out to sea in a lifeboat you get to be in the waves and it's good you need to have that right in your life it's exciting it's being on it" (27)

He describes thrashing out to sea in a lifeboat as exciting and makes him feel good. He is asking for us to hear that this excitement is more than an emotional response it is 'being on it' a state that is right in his life. From painting the door one minute and being in a life boat the next is a deliberate way of trying to explain what would be seen by most military members as a thrilling alternative to the mundanity of everyday life. It could be viewed by many civilians however, as unnecessary risk taking, albeit justifiable when someone else's life is at risk.

Living the moment was a way to explain the frequent claims amongst the participants that a combat situation in which life is risked and there is possibility of death there is a shared experience that is difficult for most civilians to understand. The way it was expressed here was to reveal close links between risk-taking, emotions and a way of being that other ex-services' person would not need explaining.

4.2.5 "Being a veteran"

Veteran is the title accredited to a person within the civilian community who has served in the British Armed Forces for at least one day. This is regardless of which of the Armed Services or whether the person was a full-time or reservist/part time member. Becoming a veteran is also not subject to any criteria of age, experience, rank, qualification or conduct. The term veteran was raised by many of the participants who had different interpretations of what this title means. There were those who saw only those who had sustained life changing injuries should be 'entitled' to be called veteran. However, as the following participant explains, veteran identity can be a sudden realisation, one that is not considered prior to leaving the military:

> *"we feel a dislocation of expectation….suddenly our whole identity is brought in to question… we are called 'veterans' which by name implies we are old and washed-up and suddenly no one has 'time' for us in the same way as military friends did… we have to make our own way and be judged on our own social standing in society." (10)*

Speaking for his colleagues, this participant describes this identity as something that really only has relevance after leaving the Armed Forces. He explains an interpretation of veteran as 'old and washed up' as one that he considers would be familiar to other veterans. He links the claim that no-one has time for veterans in the same way as military friends have for each other. 'Veteran' does have an associated standing in society, however, without it a person has to make their own way or be judged on their own merits in the wider society. This participant describes being a veteran having a value in itself:

> *"getting shot at and watching friends die for pennies, the only reason you are there is for honour and the belief that you are doing something for your country so I will always be veteran first." (28)*

This participant describes always being 'veteran' first because he is wanting us to hear that he associates this identity with the honour and belief of doing something for his country. Moreover, he has been shot at and watched friends die; that his role was for pennies is for us to understand this

identity is not linked to financial reward. It would be conventional to assume integrity of a person who has demonstrated risking their life for their country. Veteran identity has historical origins and is a term widely respected within the military. It could be seen, however, that the identity of veteran was not sufficient to be considered as having particular attributes when entering the civilian community:

> *you have to feel like you're worthy like you do belong and you have a right to belong and I guess that when I was going through the process of transition there was still a feeling that I was not good enough…. I still have a lot of self-doubt and want to be reassured because I haven't got to that point yet where I have sort of faith that I am good enough (12)*

Discovering the implications of leaving the Armed Forces as different to assumptions made before leaving could be seen as challenging:

> *"it was like everyone had just turned their back on you… You feel like the rugs been pulled from under your feet you feel completely lost and helpless… " (25)*

He describes feeling lost from his military identity and familiar frames of reference. The experience of feeling alone we are to hear is due to everyone turning their back on him. He is using the explanation of having the rug pulled from under him as a way for us to understand the change in his circumstances since leaving. As this participant explains there are expectations of becoming a veteran in the civilian society that are not always fulfilled, however, it is being a veteran that provides a community within the civilian community where ex-service people's needs are managed:

> *"… if we signpost people other people will signpost them back to us… we know how they tick and they know how we tick and it's like the old saying you can't bullshit the bullshitter." (22)*

The participant is describing veteran organisations as providing a community that offer different resources. It is explained that veteran service providers can determine the merits of those seeking these resources based on having frames of reference that would alert them to who could be trusted and who could be exploiting the community. Even so, it was acknowledged that accessing support could be seen as an indication of being desperate:

"maybe when a soldier goes in there [the doctors] fresh and they are used to seeing all soldiers and they see this civilian surgery which is full of the dregs of society he struggles with that because he has to admit that he is the same as them" (28)

As this participant acknowledges, the standard of civilian identity is not one to comfortably subscribe to. It could be difficult for a civilian to hear why this participant would make such a broad judgement about people who were not ex-services as it could be assumed by the interlocutor as demonstrating pride or conceit. However, making the transition from a community where fitness, efficiency and discipline is the primary feature of membership; we are asked to hear the challenge to perception of identity when in the company of the people who comprise the mix that is the civilian community. It is on such occasions that the veteran identity is preferred when struggling with being a civilian.

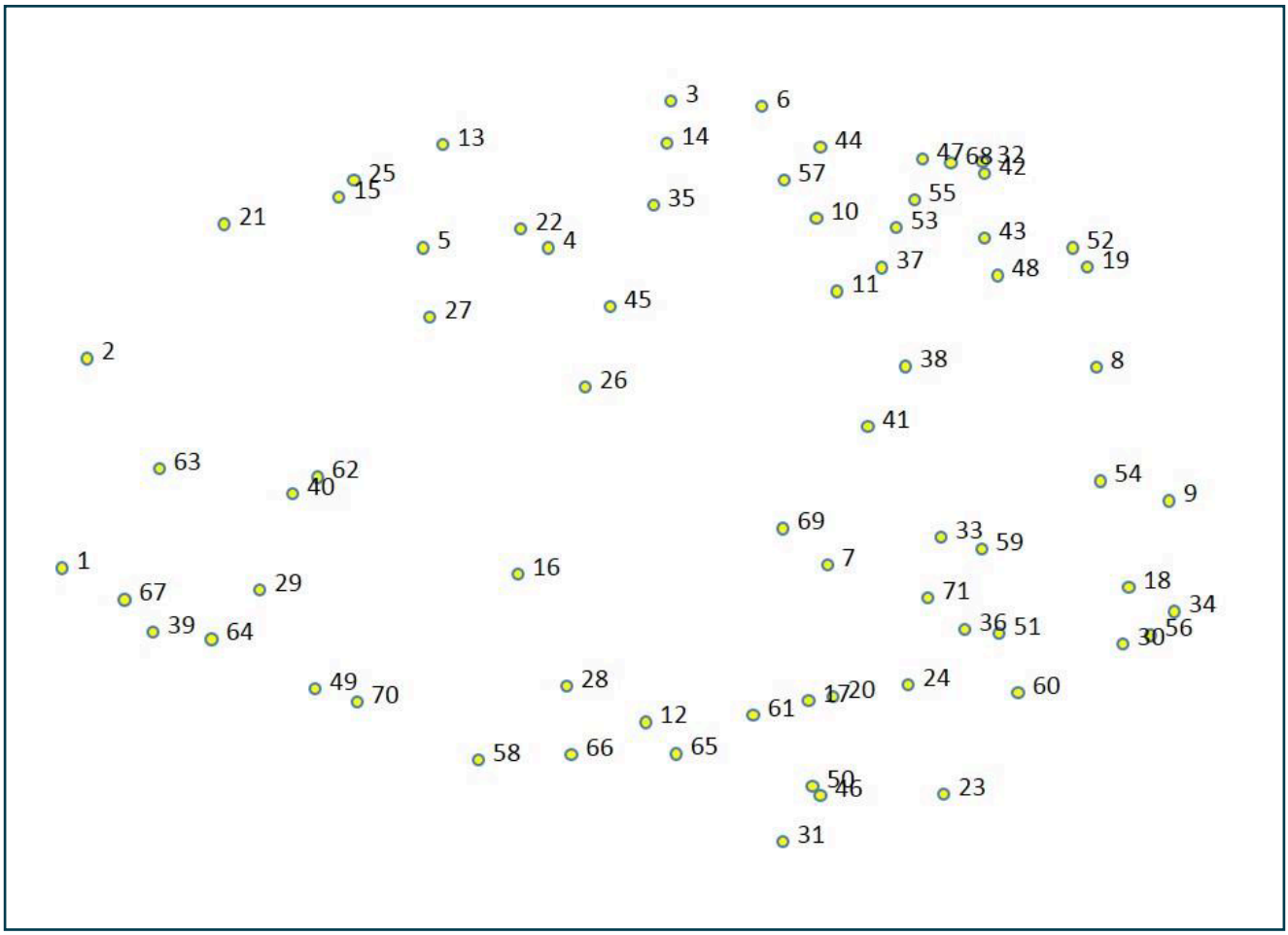
Being a veteran was a direct reference to identity as associated with relating to a community of people who were neither serving military personnel nor civilians. It was not an identity easily reconciled with for many of the participants although it provided a standard for reference that could be adopted if the person chose to or not in different circumstances. Identity for the person after leaving the Armed Forces is determined by a variety of contexts which are associated with common civilian situations. There is no evidence of ascription to an alternative 'civilian' identity with many examples of perspectives associated with a common military identity. There is evidence of an explicit and sometimes implicit hold of this military identity that continues to influence perceptions of everyday situations.

Section 5: Concept Mapping Findings

Concept Mapping Analysis

Having explored identity as a negotiation of military standards in differing civilian contexts in the first part of this report, the second part is an account of how a consensus of useful resources were revealed. As described earlier, the participants were asked about their views on essential resources for transition. This is the analysis of the 71 statements which responded to the focus prompt of 'In a community of North Wales, where the successful transition/integration of the ex-service person matters, essential resources include...' were organised into 8 unique clusters. These clusters were given identifiable names; Putting down roots, Making a living as a civilian, Mental health and specialist support services, Community welcome, Veteran links, Future plans and direction, Life skills and Changing pace. These 8 clusters are shown in the cluster map in figure 6.

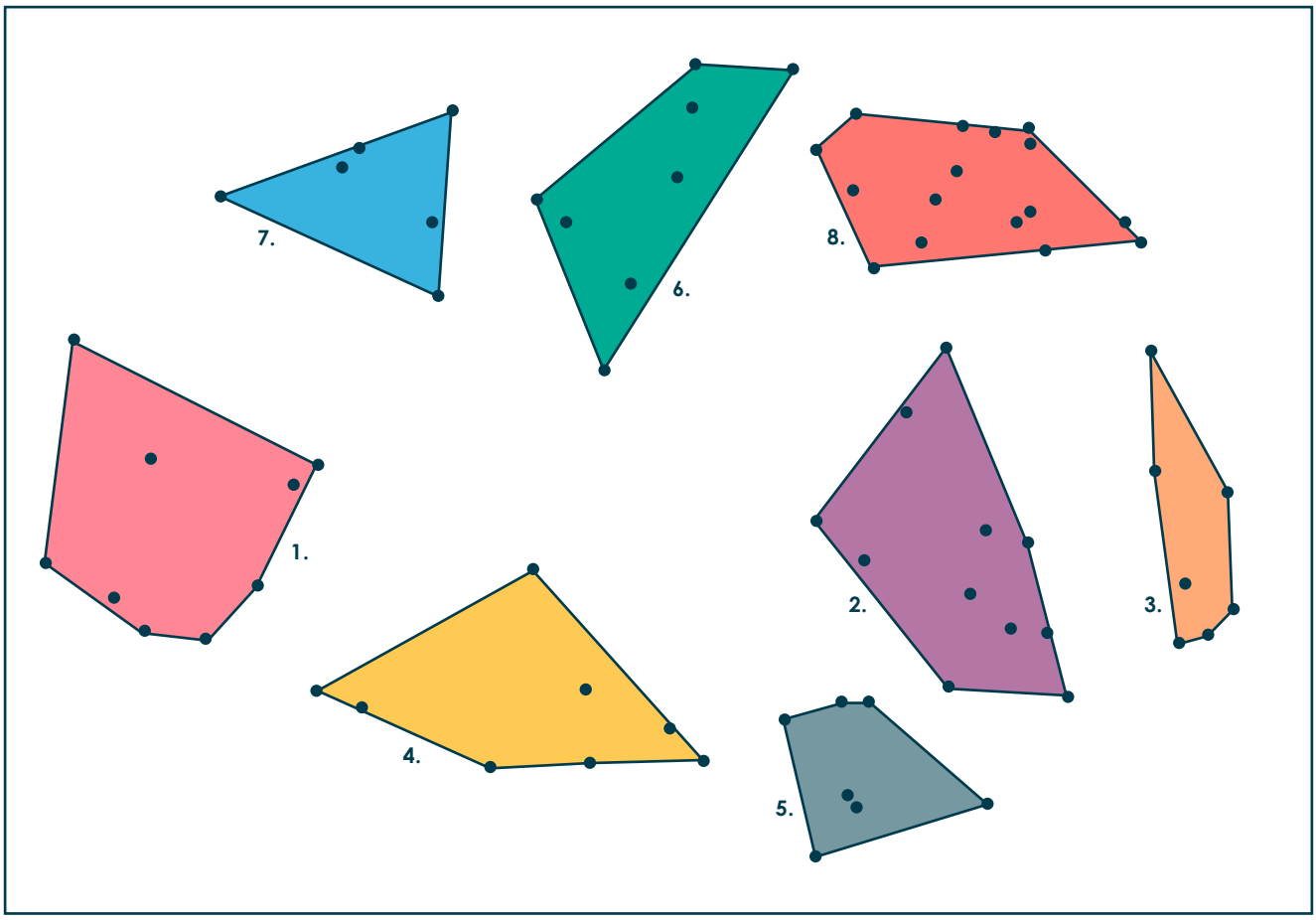
Figure 5 Point Map; each point on the map represents a statement



The stress value was calculated to determine whether the map could be considered for further analysis. It was revealed as 0.3096 which falls within the boundaries of acceptability according to Rosas and Kane (2007). As a measure it indicates the map has internal validity which means that each participant could broadly relate to the findings. In other words they recognised sufficient similarities between the statements for them not to be allocated randomly.

The first map created is a Point Map where each point on the map represents a single statement from the 'thought showering' exercise. From a multi-dimensional scaling analysis, the point map visually depicts the inter-relatedness of each statement. The statements that are closer together are therefore more similar than statements further apart. This is illustrated with the example of point 42. Ability to endure frustrations and rejections, and having emotional resilience which was often sorted next to point 32. Resist trying to settle all of your difficulties at the same time, but not very often sorted next to point 2. Reliable income to support/provide for family. See Appendix 3 for full list of statements.

Figure 6 Cluster Map showing the 8 clusters of statements



1. Putting down roots
2. Making a living as a civilian
3. Mental health and specialist support services
4. Community welcome
5. Veteran links
6. Future planning and direction
7. Life skills
8. Changing pace

The cluster map above was developed using hierarchal group analysis and depicts the 71 statements sorted into manageable clusters. Each cluster is made up of statements which are similar in content and therefore could be managed together in the form of an action plan.

Clusters which are closer together (e.g. clusters 6 and 8) indicate that their content are more closely related, in other words, their component statements have been sorted together more often, however clusters further apart (e.g. cluster 4 and 8) are deemed to be less related. At face value, a sense check of the map confirms that makes sense and the map can loosely be understood in three sections; 1. Clusters 6 and 8 refer to capabilities the ex-service person has to consider upon transition, 2. Clusters 7 and 1 refer to the domestic and family life of the ex-service person, and 3. Clusters 4, 5, 2 and 3 are concerned with the civilian community.

Figure 7 Importance cluster rating map. Layers indicate importance rating

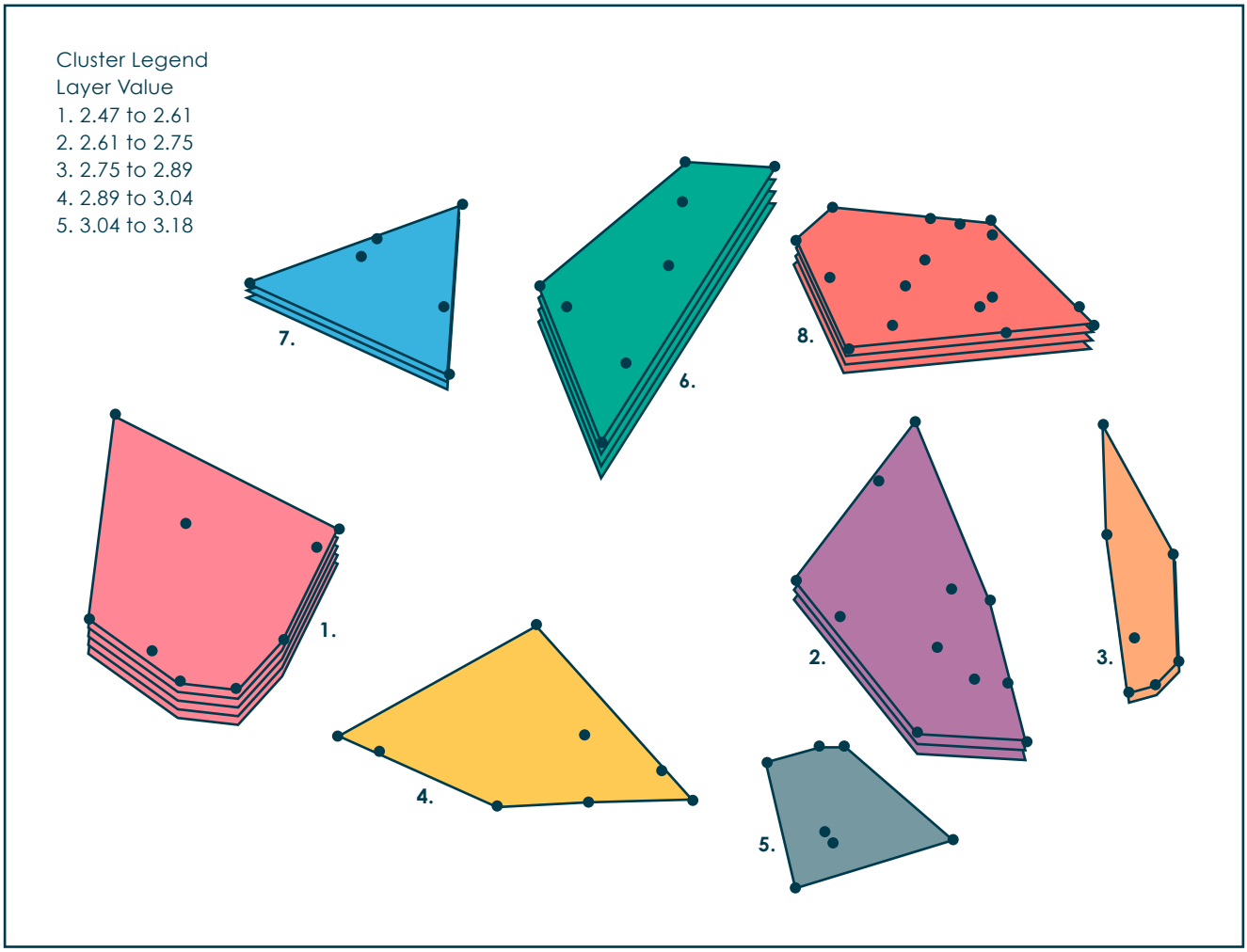
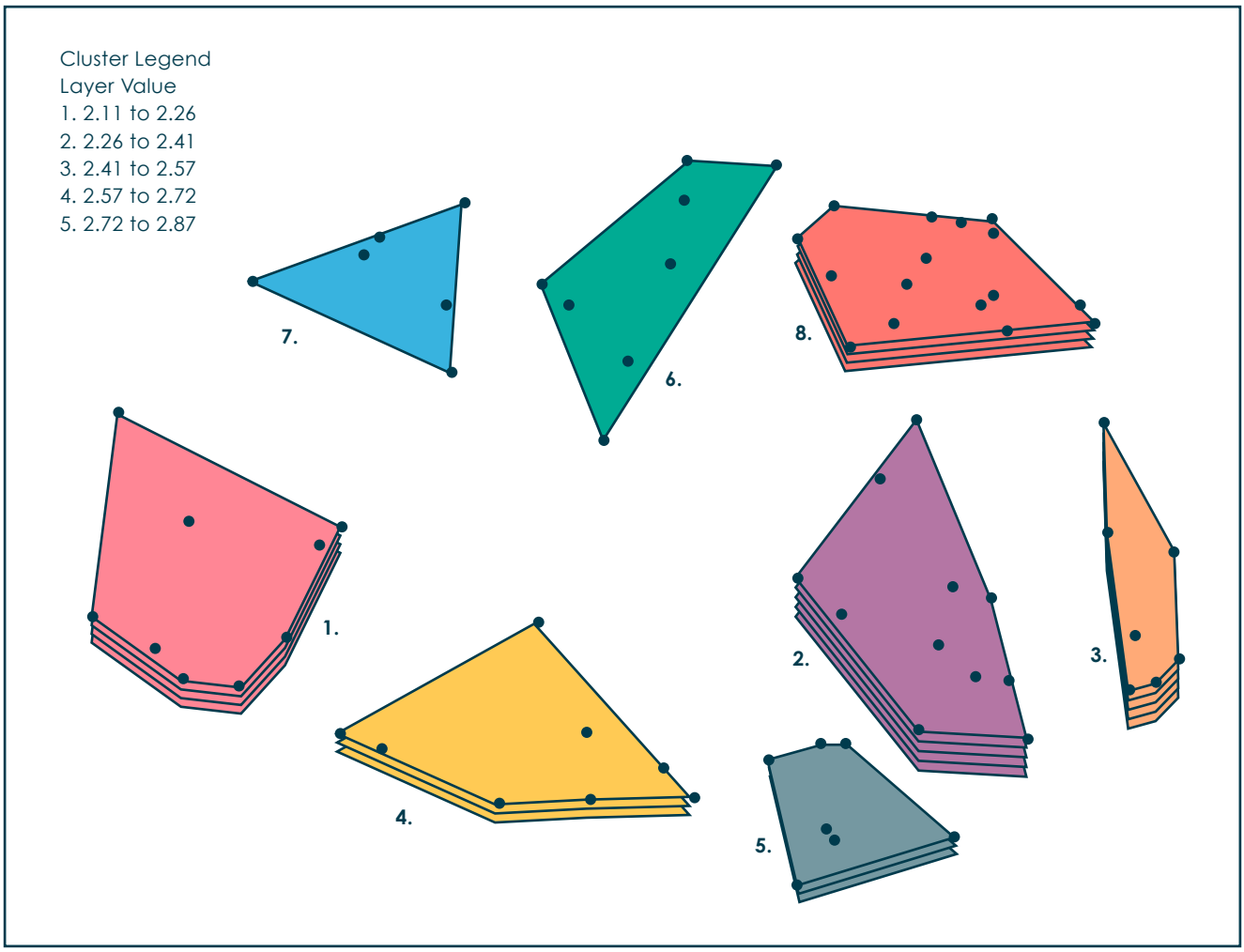


Figure 7 shows the importance cluster rating map, this is the cluster map with the average importance ratings overlaid, occupying the third dimension. It is visually depicted from the map that the most important clusters when transitioning to civilian life from the Armed Forces are; **Putting down roots, Changing pace** and **Future plans & direction**. Similarly, figure 8 shows the challenge cluster rating map. By the same assumptions, it is visually clear that the clusters considered most challenging by the group of participants are; **Making a living as a civilian, Mental health and specialist support services, Changing pace** and **Putting down roots.**
Cluster 1 is titled **Putting down roots** as this included statements which acknowledged challenges

Figure 8 Challenge cluster rating map. Layers indicate challenge rating



to desires to create a home. **Having an affordable home, A reliable income** and **Access to local schools** for their children were outcomes considered highly important and highly challenging when transitioning back to North Wales. Whilst these resources provide a list of resources the veteran has identified as helpful the narrative offers greater insight into how to support capabilities achieve these resource outcomes. With family as central to efforts to put down roots there is evidence of motivation to prioritise resources for partner and children. Capabilities to put down roots for example include managing children's expectations to make friends, settling into a new learning environment and learning to adjust to a change in environment. There is also having to navigate close partner relationships everyday, respond to the mundanity of household chores and demonstrate sensitivity to family needs.

The second cluster is named **Making a living as a civilian** and the statements within this cluster are centred on not just generating income, but also being a valuable member of the community. The resources identified within this cluster include 'Local business that offer job opportunities' emphasising priority placed on 'getting a job'. Statements for instance 'Ability to see yourself as a valuable member of the community' and 'Employment opportunities where my military skills

are transferrable' on the other hand would point to capabilities identified as a means to act on opportunities when they arise.

The third cluster is entitled **Mental health and specialist support services** as this brings together what the veterans identified as support services for specific needs. These resources include occupational therapists to improve independence, substance misuse initiatives and mental health service provisions. These resources have been organised together by participants even though they are different in what they deliver. As well as providing potential support for veterans it is also possible that these resources could be recognised as employment opportunities for those with capabilities to work with other veterans with specific problems.

The fourth cluster is entitled **Community welcome** and this represents concerns the ex-service personnel may have regarding fitting in to civilian communities and what could be addressed to improve transition. For instance; Commitment of LA and employers to meet the military covenant, Community understanding of the contemporary veteran and Community empathy with ex-military are all statements organised within this cluster. All these community attributes were seen as inter-related by the participants, however they were not seen as a priority during transition when compared to other resources.

The fifth cluster is titled **Veteran links** and similar to the fourth cluster, these statements have a focus on the ex-military community. These statements are resources which point towards utilising continued involvement with military life through contact hubs, associations and military organisations. In comparison to the other areas for consideration these are of low priority.

The sixth cluster is titled **Future plans and direction** and depicts a number of attributes the participants consider as helpful when transitioning back to the civilian community. These characteristics highlight the confidence provided by 'having a direction' and 'being confident in your potential'. Being 'willing to learn' new things is difficult to contextualise although not surprising. Through understanding the veteran context, it would be expected that having 'a vocation or clear direction for your career' and the 'Ability to sketch solutions to problems' would be capabilities judged as valuable when transitioning from the Armed Forces. Consequently, these capabilities were regarded as very important to participants but were not a challenge.

The seventh cluster is titled **Life skills** as could be assumed of someone leaving home for the first time. These statements refer to 'essentials' of everyday life which include; having useful qualifications, being able to cook and being domestically competent.

The final eighth cluster is titled **Changing pace** and this is the largest group of capabilities and summarises the importance and challenge of managing time, priorities and expectations when becoming a civilian. These statements concur with difficulties referred to in the interviews regarding filling time and taking a step back to weigh up options when making decisions. These capabilities can be seen as reflections on how to manage adapting to the civilian community. Being tolerant, managing expectation of others and being resilient to frustrations which may arise are recognised here as both important and challenging.

Pattern Match and Go-zones (Action Points)

A pattern match is a bivariate comparison of the average rating for importance and the average rating of challenge for each cluster, consequently showing agreement or disagreement between different ratings. This visually illustrates which clusters contain the most actionable statements; which clusters are the priority to address.

Figure 9 Pattern match depicting the priority clusters

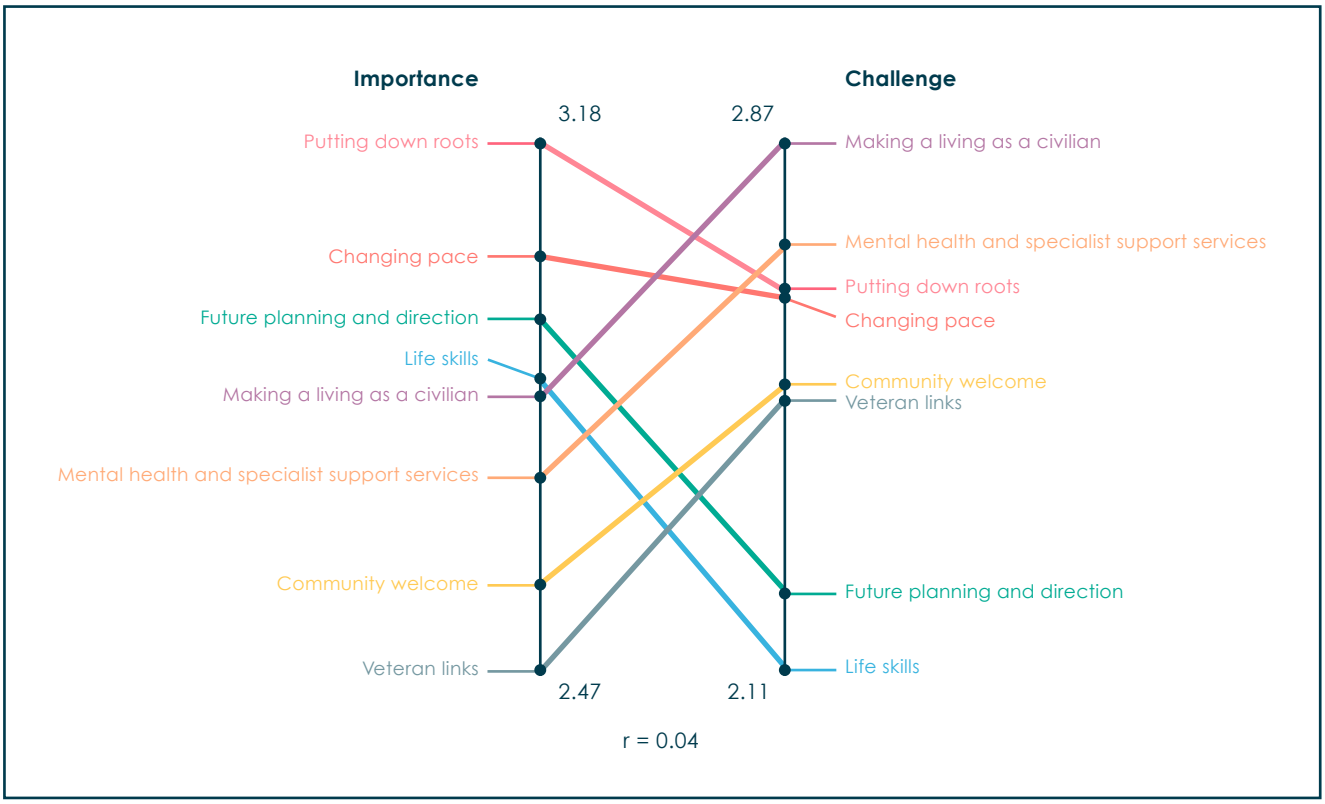
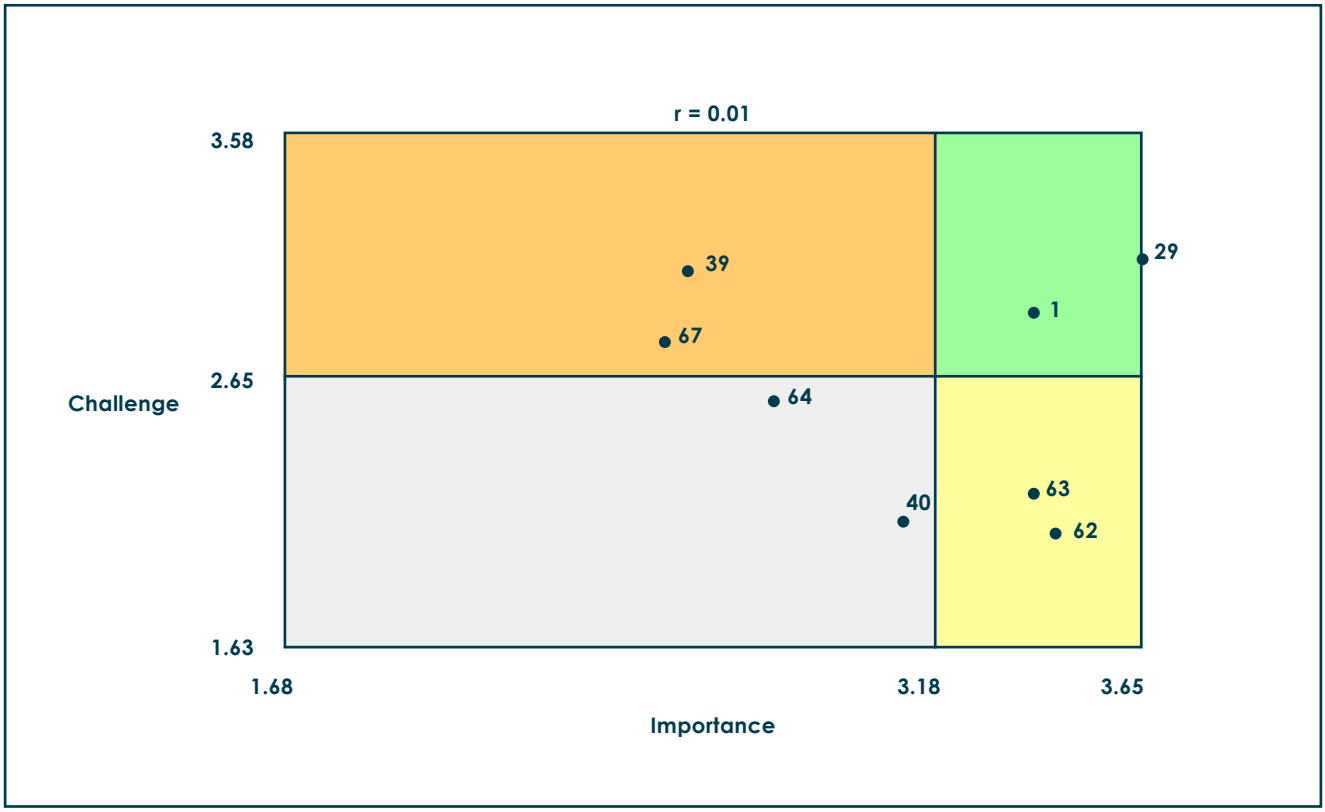


Figure 9 shows the average cluster rating for importance down the left hand side of the graph and average cluster rating for challenge down the right hand side of the graph. This is a pattern match and can be used to compare the two rating scores for each cluster. From the pattern match it is clear that there is some discrepancy between the cluster ratings and this is reflected in the r value, indicating no correlation between the two scores because if the two ratings were correlated the pattern match would simulate a ladder. For reference, **Future planning and direction** is considered as important by respondents, however the average rating of how challenging the resources and capabilities involved in this cluster is much lower. From the veteran context established in the first study, this is unsurprising as capabilities needed to move forward e.g. 'Having a clear direction' are attributes also valued in the military. Similarly **'Making a living as a civilian'** is recorded within the middle ground of importance, however is seen as the most challenging aspect, which alludes to challenges when attempting to fit into the civilian community.

From the pattern match, it is clear that the clusters which are considered priority by respondents are, **Putting down roots, Changing pace** and **Making a living as a civilian**. When developing recommendations, consideration should be given to areas which are most important but also have the greatest need to be addressed. These clusters contain resources and capabilities which are considered to be both important and challenging to veterans and will therefore be analysed in more detail.

In order to look at these a go-zone was produced for each of these priority clusters to gain a higher level understanding of what the specific resources and capabilities within each cluster are most actionable. The first go-zone created was for the cluster **'Putting down roots'** (Figure 10) and this map visually illustrates which statements within that cluster are most actionable and these are positioned in the green 'go-zone'. The most actionable statements here are resources ex-Armed Forces personnel deem to be essential when transitioning in North Wales and these are; 1. Affordable Housing in the area of work with Good Schools, 2. Reliable income to support/provide for family and 29. Automatic placements for children in schools when moving into area.

Figure 10 Go zone most actionable statements within Putting Down Roots



1. Affordable housing in the area of work with good schools
29. Automatic placements for children in schools when moving into area

The second go-zone was created for the cluster **'Making a living as a civilian'** and is illustrated in Figure 11. The essential resource required here is 'Plenty of local businesses that offer job opportunities'. The other statements situated in the go-zone are the capabilities ex-Armed Forces personnel can have to exploit the resources. These capabilities include being able to transfer military skills in a way that is recognised by employers and having a full understanding of what resources are out there and how to access these.

Figure 11 Go zone most actionable statements within Making a Living

33. Plenty of local businesses that offer job opportunities
36. Community trust about military CV
59. Full understanding of where to get the help previously provided by the 'military bubble' e.g. primary care, dentistry, pastoral care
60. Full understanding of what services there is available to ex-servicemen and women
69. Employment opportunities where my military skills are transferrable.

The final go-zone created illustrated the most actionable capabilities within **'Changing pace'** (Figure 12). The concept of changing pace when transitioning from the Armed Forces contained the most capabilities and looking at the go-zone map, having emotional resilience and not being hard on yourself were high scoring both in terms of importance on challenge.

Figure 12 Go zone Changing Pace with most actionable statements

42. Ability to endure frustrations and rejections, having emotional resilience
68. Ability to set achievable goals and don't beat yourself up if you don't get there

From assessing the results from the concept mapping analysis; **Putting down roots, Making a living as a civilian** and **Changing pace** are areas of concern when transitioning from the Armed Forces. For the community of North Wales to address these there will need to be consultations about building partnerships and collaborations for co-ordinating actions.

Section 6: Discussion

This report starts with an assumption that transition is related to perspective and that this presents challenges to an enduring collective frame of reference in the form of a military identity. Similar to other research literature on military identity (Brinn & Auerbach, 2015; Brunger et al., 2013; True, Rigg & Butler, 2014; Smith & True, 2014; Woodward & Jenkings, 2011), the accounts gathered for this study provide a compelling description of a formation of military identity, comprising characteristics which are familiar to other members of the military and generally unfamiliar to the civilian population. These characteristics were identified by listening for features of conversation that would point to being an ex-member of the Armed Forces.

From the narratives in this research, three methods for producing a military identity were identified, 'it's drilled into you', 'mission command' and 'have each other's back'. These were confirmed as reflective of common influencing frames of reference associated with having a collective military identity. Having been practised sufficiently to become an intuitive way of being, there was evidence in accounts of everyday practice that these standards providing an enduring way civilian situations were viewed. Moreover, these influential perspectives could be sustained through establishing environments and engaging with people of familiar view by for example, gaining employment with other ex-military members. Without reinforcement of military values and cultural identity, navigating 'belonging' in a new social context reveal tensions that could manifest at any time in the transition process. This phenomenon is described by reference to 'keeping in shape' as a model for understanding a common strategy for facing challenges of being a veteran in transition. To keep in shape is to encompass all aspects of identity associated with the military. This report argues that within the unstructured and more elastic context of the civilian community this core model of identity has limitations for a sustainable successful transition. It also concludes that there needs to be a more concerted effort for civic engagement with ex-Armed Forces communities. Recognition of and valuing of individual worth to employers and the wider community could support development of a more substantiated sense of self respect.

The people interviewed for this study comprised a broad mix sample, however, while there were notable differences in use of vocabulary, using a common military identity it was possible to reveal potential tensions of everyday life that could be shared as issues of significance. The effort of trying to keep in shape while navigating the freedom of an arbitrary civilian life are most apparent when tensions are experienced by conflicting frames of reference. As common when forming an individual identity a foundation desire for self-respect, recognition for meeting responsibilities and maintaining motivation are fundamental. As depicted, tensions between keeping shape when moving forward, changing pace, putting down roots and living the moment are argued in this report as unique to veterans as a group of people.

As was apparent from Jenkins (2011) research, close bonding is considered an integral part of the military identity. Jenkins referred to this bonding as a 'fictive kinship'. As a characteristic of a military social network this kinship was apparent by expressions of loyalty to a collective, regardless of whether the other person was known to them. From the narratives in this study we could hear the emphasis on trust as a 'taken for granted' frame of reference because of the

implicit 'rules' of a military membership and the confidence of the competence of others in a conflict situation. Decision-making based on reliance of the understanding that everyone else would be equally trustworthy is a challenge in the civilian community that is not easily reconciled. This value of trustworthiness between fellow veterans could be heard as a strong frame of reference that, even though not guaranteed, endured after leaving the Armed Forces. Keeping in shape could be seen as a method for negotiating the civilian landscape with 'placing trust' a significant challenge because of assumptions about civilians as unreliable or less disciplined. Maintaining the characteristics of a military identity could be heard as both conscious and unconscious performances. As a characteristic of identity 'Keeping in Shape' provides a defined and familiar frame of reference. In civilian community circumstances, however, it can also be heard to have limited value when trying to 'fit in'. If the veteran can keep this shape regardless of the context or establish a context where their military characteristics are valued, it is possible to live in the civilian community whilst retaining a military identity.

Letting go and becoming more responsive to the contours of the civilian community, presents challenges. It requires the development of capabilities to exploit resources, skills and aptitudes for reflecting on what matters personally to each individual when living as a civilian. Having left the Armed Forces, the family provides an alternative context within which to assert an identity, however, this is not always straightforward. Skills to set goals and prioritise objectives with efficiency and discipline are not always valued by family members, leading to potential conflict between identity as a parent/spouse and expectations of others affected by these everyday roles. Putting down roots is a method of explaining decision-making as a desire for stability and to demonstrate a commitment to being a good spouse and parent. On the whole, veterans appeal to a convention of normative standards that are assumed to be familiar to everyone about what is the husband/wife/parent identity. This is revealed by reference to what are considered compromises such as 'I'll sometimes help in the house now' or 'I let my wife take charge of things like that!' Traditional expectations of being the bread-winner, being an authority in the household and having respect as a parent are assumptions associated with a narrow view of such conventional views. This is a source of potential conflict in when a more flexible understanding of these roles is required. Tolerance and compromise towards others are strategies adopted that could be heard to have some success for navigating transition but it is unclear about the sustainability of this approach. Being familiar with moving around and prioritising work over all other responsibilities can often be sources for conflict in everyday situations particularly within the home. Again, as a strategy for managing responsibilities, 'moving around' or 'moving on' can be seen to offer some respite from the unrelenting effort of keeping shape in a messy civilian environment. The most common criteria for measuring success when putting down roots as a veteran is to provide financial security even if it means the veteran has to live away or keep moving around.

As reflected in research on maintaining relationships by Wilcox et al (2015), Brockman et al (2016) and Black and Papile (2010) it is expectations of roles and knowing how to predict what is an 'appropriate' emotional response that can be the source of personal conflict in everyday living. Recognising 'normal' emotional responses to different circumstances and managing personal behaviour also challenges the notion of keeping in shape as a military identity. As described by Demers (2011), however, not knowing the rules of civilian culture and 'appropriate' behaviour and being unable to predict responses of others, could explain veterans remaining dislocated from the civilian community. The decision-making associated with challenges of 'fitting in' is reflected in engaging in a 'Changing Pace'. Referred to as 'walking on egg shells' by one participant who explains his management of uncomfortable situations, another describes keeping themselves to themselves as a strategy. Many however, demonstrated exceptional energy and endurance to assert some control over unfamiliar situations. For some, flexibility of no longer having to conform to strict performance according to expectations of those in a higher rank, is an opportunity, for others it could be seen as a loss of structure and direction.

'Living the moment' captures what is unconscious agency, not needing to think about consequences but able to experience a 'thrill' of competence in action of being and doing. Demers (2011) makes a passing reference to the alertness of a combat situation because of the demands on performance. Verey et al (2012) cites the lack of real challenges in civilian society as a rationale for risk taking behaviour. Civilian life induced boredom could be seen as an explanation for wanting to participate in extreme sports and thrill seeking behaviour, however, 'living the moment' from what the participants describe in this study could be more closely linked to self-respect, competence and identity. It is possible to hear a tension between having experienced an intensity of purpose which offers what Arendt (1974) describes as a freedom from the mundanity of everyday necessities. The realisation of tensions between futility and worth is made more explicit where recognition of skilled competence is related to public recognition. That is, until the boredom of necessity is no longer a source of frustration, there is a possibility of experiencing feeling a slave to the pointlessness of everyday labours. This living the moment can be seen as a healthy way of being when an action can replicate a similar sense of worth. It can also be seen as a detrimental pursuit of a 'thrill' without consideration of consequences.

According to Koenig et al (2014) the loss of community and camaraderie explains the desire to retain a relationship with other ex-Service people through veteran organisations and social networking. Veterans in this study, expressed differing views about veteran organisations as for only those who have problems or for those wanting to help other veterans. There was also a lack of consensus about wanting to be associated with the military identity by being a veteran. Even without enthusiasm for the term 'veteran' it could be heard as preferable to being associated with the identity of 'civilian'. For many leaving the military, expressions of continued responsibility towards other veterans justified making financial donations or wanting to work in veteran organisations. Perceptions include veterans who need help could/would only be provided for by other veterans. The general acknowledgment of a veteran was that they would be unlikely to seek support unless 'desperately in need'. It was also generally accepted that the veteran community places considerable importance on veterans supporting each other. Links between being a veteran and being in need or experiencing problems have become familiar. This

perception could be heard to present challenges about how the ex-Armed Forces person views their relationship with this veteran community. Conflict of accepting the veteran identity is related to the collective view of being seen as either a veteran who helps veterans in need or one who is in the receipt of help and support. Exploration into the influence of pride and shame on veteran identity and civilian perception could be a subject for further research.

While this study did not seek to explore specific problems associated with transition, accounts of leaving the Armed Forces reveal considerable work undertaken to adjust perceptions of self. The effort of this work and success of strategies were more apparent in some accounts than others. As identified by Ahern et al (2015), Brunger et al (2013) and Grimell (2016), claims of loss feature frequently but not always with expressions of regret. Indeed, it was common to be given the response 'I am glad to be out' when asked about aspects of the military identity which were less nostalgic. This however, did not always point to a more successful transition. As reflected in the 'Changing Pace' accounts, finding common grounds for communicating with civilians presents problems. The conventional understanding of having a military background is a source of discomfort for many civilians because of unfamiliarity of what this means. There is clearly a need to explore and reconcile ex-Armed Forces' and civilian perceptions of a more contemporary understanding about the veteran identity. 'Being a veteran' should be a standard that is recognised with the archaeology of respect attributed to this historically relevant identity. It would therefore seem reasonable to engage the civilian community to address their relationship with this particular ex-military community to explore how it could contribute to making transition a more collaborative endeavour.

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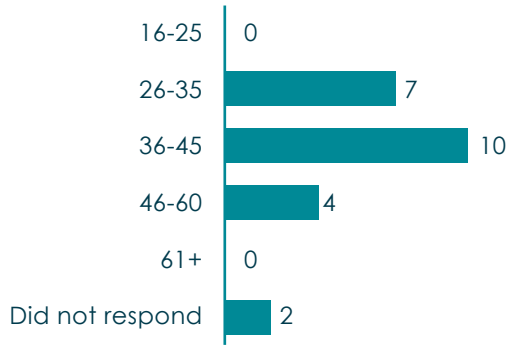
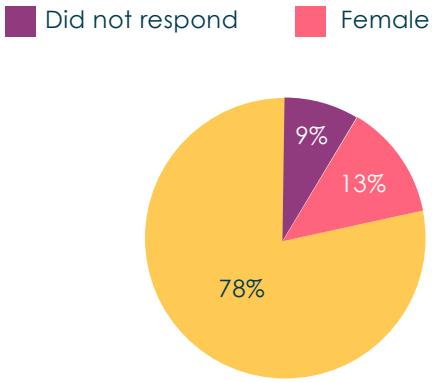
Appendix 1

Demographic table

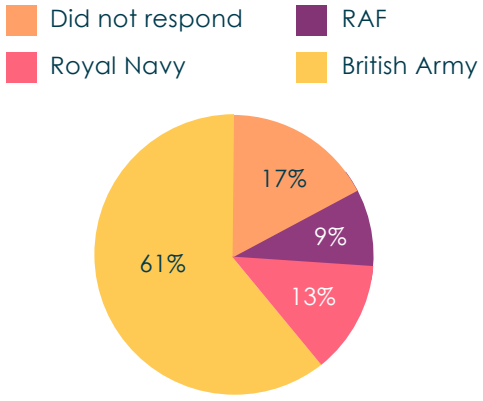
Age



Gender



Service



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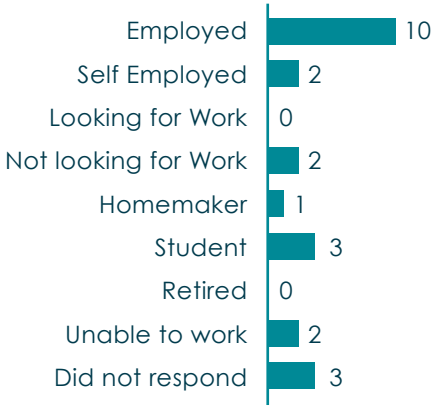

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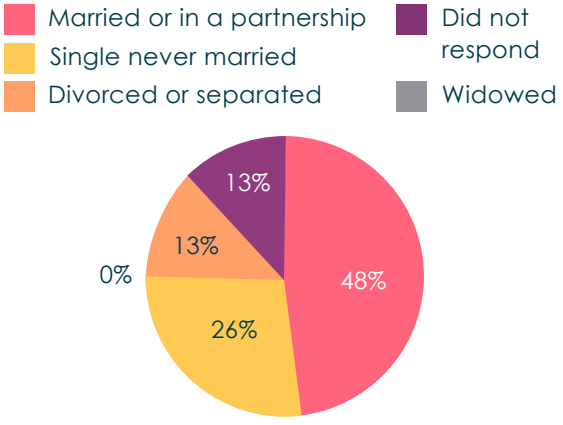

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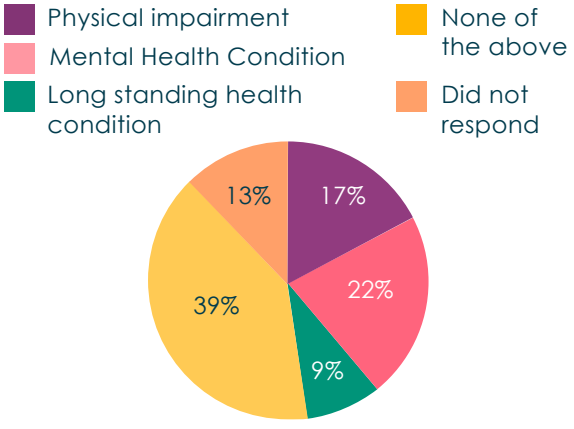

Appendix 2

Project steering group terms of reference

1. Constitution

The Steering group is an advisory body established by the Lead researcher to advise the research team and provide oversight of the effectiveness of this research project management, control and governance arrangements. The arrangements to promote the project, disseminate findings and maximize impact of the research.

2. Membership

The group will consist of members representing the Local Health Board (BCUHB), the North Wales Armed Forces Forum (NWAFF), Public Health Wales, the Veteran community and the Third Sector. The group will have no executive responsibility for the management of the Research project. The group may co-opt members with particular expertise.

Numbers:

Six members in total not including the researchers

Quorum

No less than two will attend each meeting if this is not possible the lead research will circulate a brief report to all members and re-arrange another meeting.

3. Authority

The Group is authorised investigate any activity within its terms of reference. It is authorised to seek any information it requires from the Research Team.

The Group is authorised to obtain independent professional advice and to secure the attendance of non-members with relevant experience and expertise, if it considers this necessary, however it may not incur direct expenditure.

4. Proceedings

The Group must meet at least times three per year which will normally be sufficient to cover all the routine areas of business. The Lead researcher may request additional meetings as required. The internal (Glyndwr) (FiM) auditors would not normally attend meetings, however they may be invited to attend where appropriate.

5. Duties

The duties of the Group include:

a) ensuring the Research complies with the requirements of an Ethical Code of Practice;
b) reviewing the Researcher's methods for the assessment and management of risk for participants;
c) advising the Researcher on the terms of engagement with agencies and authorities;
d) advising the Researcher on whether they are demonstrating efficiency and effectiveness;
e) agreeing the nature and scope of the research project;
f) Discussing findings and conclusions arising from research;
g) considering and advising on the draft reports to be circulated to FiM;

h) considering major findings and promoting co-ordination between Researcher and influential authorities;
i) In the event of concerns about the progress of the research project the steering group can contact the Head of Social and Life Sciences as the research contract signatory.

6. Reporting Procedures

The group will circulate the minutes of its meetings between its members and there should be an opportunity at meetings to discuss matters raised by the minutes. A copy of these minutes will be kept for auditing purposes until the end of the project.

The Researcher will produce an informal quarterly report summarising the activity for the period which it will submit to the group for comments before presentation to the NWAFF. The annual report will be submitted to the group for sign off prior to submission to the Forces in Mind.

When	Activity
Year One	Implement a robust and varied recruitment strategy, offering an equal opportunity access to both Welsh and English speakers and those 'hard to reach' members of the ex-service community.
	Establish on-line contact forum for inviting participants and keeping interested stakeholders informed of project progress. To conduct fieldwork involving interviewing up to 30 participants across North Wales
	Transcribe and analyse data to produce an interim report and inform the next stage of project.
	Provide teaching and support for participants engaging with the online data collection phase of project.
	Collate and analyse data for final report
	Write up final report
	Organise methods for and engaging in disseminating findings, close project and make recommendations for policy, practice, education and further research.

Appendix 3

Table of participants

	Gender	No. years since leaving	No. years' service
Interview 1	Male	1	25
Interview 2	Male	3	24
Interview 3	Male	1	7
Interview 4	Male	3	14
Interview 5	Female	4	13
Interview 6	Male	<1	16
Interview 7	Male	<1	21
Interview 8	Male	1	7
Interview 9	Female	<1	23
Interview 10	Male	2	27
Interview 11	Male	<1	5
Interview 12	Male	21	17
Interview 13	Male	24	13
Interview 14	Male	3	7
Interview 15	Male	11	-
Interview 16	Male	7	2
Interview 17	Male	1	8
Interview 18	Male	16	3
Interview 19	Male	4	26
Interview 20	Male	<1	24
Interview 21	Male	15	5
Interview 22	Female	15	12
Interview 23	Male	-	-
Interview 24	Male	-	9
Interview 25	Male	5	21
Interview 26	Male	2	>20
Interview 27	Male	<1	5
Interview 28	Male	3	13
Interview 29	Male	8	20
Interview 30	Male	3	-

Appendix 4

Full list of statements from concept mapping survey

Cluster 1 Putting Down Roots

1. Affordable Housing in the area of work with Good Schools
2. Reliable income to support/provide for family
29. Automatic placements for children in schools when moving into area.
39. Local housing in a close community
40. Having family for support and emotional offloading
62. Family and friends
63. Stable family life
64. Good rental housing
67. Housing in rural areas

Cluster 2 Making a Living as a Civilian

7. Local recruitment fairs
24. Support for family to adapt to civilian culture and/or language
33. Plenty of local businesses that offer job opportunities
36. Community trust about military CV
38. Ability to see yourself as a valuable member of the community
41. Motivation to belong to the community
51. The use of a careers support officer
59. Full understanding of where to get the help previously provided by the 'military bubble' e.g. primary care, dentistry, pastoral care
60. Full understanding of what services there is available to ex-servicemen and women
69. Employment opportunities where my military skills are transferrable.
71. Someone to give a tick list of objectives to achieve

Cluster 3 Mental Health and Specialist Support Services

8. Support on being more confident and independent
9. Occupational therapists helping us enhance our basic life skills.
18. Organizations that support and actively look to employ ex service personnel.
30. Support from substance misuse initiatives e.g. ARCH
34. Mental Health teams available for ex-servicemen and women locally
54. Educational establishments where I can use my Enhanced Learning Credits
56. Therapeutic intervention held with CAIS

Cluster 4 Community Welcome

12. Definition of what a contemporary veteran is
16. Employers' acceptance of stamped Service Records and Individual Testimony
28. Connection with your community whilst in Service
49. Safe community where my Ex military past will not be a constant security worry for my family and me
58. A community that has empathy with Ex military

65. Evidence of local area commitment to meeting the 'Military Covenant'
66. Civilian awareness of Army roles and ranks.
70. Having a partner who shared your time in

Cluster 5 Veteran Links

17. A resource centre with people to guide the most unaware ex-servicemen and women
20. Local civilian contact hubs
23. Open a TA Centre once a week
31. The British legion
46. Active military charities
50. An active and thriving Ex-military community based around Unit Associations.
61. Local veteran contact hubs.

Cluster 6 Future Plans and Direction

3. Willingness to learn
4. Basic life skills such as cooking and tasks that help us deal with day to day stresses that may arise
6. Have confidence in your potential.
14. Being able to set a good example
22. Ability to sketch solutions to problems
26. Diplomatic sensitivity
35. Having a vocation or clear direction for your career
45. Understanding that 'civvie street is full of slow winners'

Cluster 7 Life Skills

5. Ability to give something to the community
13. Having a driving licence
15. Ability to cook
21. Having useful qualifications
25. Being good around the house
27. Relevant courses to gear me into going back to work

Cluster 8 Changing Pace

10. Peace of mind when managing ones expectations.
11. Know how to plan for the future
19. Acknowledging emotional vulnerability
32. Resist trying to settle all of your difficulties at the same time
37. Being able to talk the language
42. Ability to endure frustrations and rejections, having emotional resilience
43. Tolerance
44. Don't be afraid to ask questions or to ask for advice
47. Keeping busy and focused
48. Developing a new interest/hobby
52. Having realistic expectations of others
53. Identification of short, medium and long-term goals
55. Ability to prioritise commitments
57. Knowing what to do with your time
68. Ability to set achievable goals and don't beat yourself up if you don't get there

Notes

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