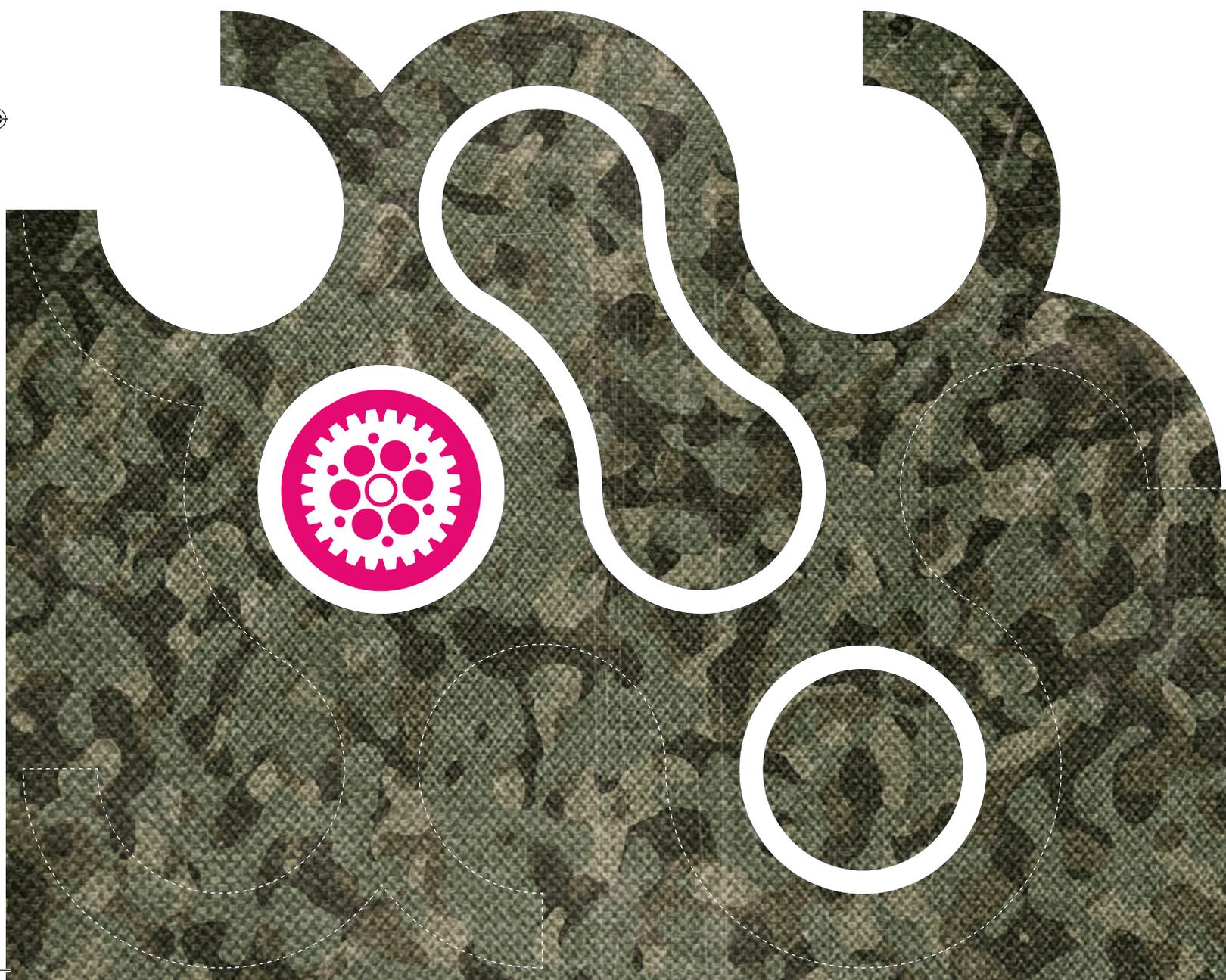




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WHITE PAPER

Ex-forces personnel in FM



FOREWORD



■ Life in the military is unique. Most people join at a formative stage of their personal and professional lives, making the forces less of a career and more a way of life. I know this from personal experience, having served over 23 years in the army before returning to 'civvy street' in 2008.

Re-entering civilian life can be intimidating. Despite in-depth training and a culture that instils meticulous preparation, the move can still present challenges for even the most experienced veterans. This is one reason why CTS has commissioned a report that explores the military-civilian life transition. It offers a new perspective on the armed forces experience, the skills veterans hold, and why they are often an underexploited source of talent.

This report also looks at why facilities management is home to a large number of former servicemen and women. Why is it seen as a civilian equivalent? What makes the industry such an accommodating place for so many people with such a broad range of different skills?

These questions are examined using the recollections of veterans who now work in FM, as well as those who advise leavers during their notice period. It is aimed at serving military professionals who are either considering a civilian career move, or are in the process of leaving, as well as FM businesses that are interested in hiring more ex-military personnel.

In reading this report, service leavers should take confidence in knowing their knowledge and skills are appreciated in the corporate world. It should also equip FM businesses with a better knowledge of the forces, the advantages service leavers offer, and explain why ex-military personnel are so often the best person for the job.

This is a topic of close personal interest. I hope this report has a positive impact within defence and FM – two industries that I care deeply about and that have given me so much.

Bryan McLaggan
Managing Director
CTS

This report also looks at why facilities management is home to a large number of former servicemen and women



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INTRODUCTION

■ **A lifelong military career is now a rare occurrence. In recent years the MoD has released more people than it has recruited, leaving large numbers of ex-forces personnel searching for a stable civilian job.**

According to 2019 figures, the total strength of the UK armed forces stands at 192,160, representing a decrease of 1,980 people since January 2018.^[1] On first inspection this 1% reduction may seem negligible, but a closer look at the figures will reveal this as one in a long line of cutbacks that has left the UK's armed forces in uninterrupted decline.

There are many reasons for this. First, the changing nature of warfare and fewer serious international conflicts have shifted defence priorities. Secondly, and most importantly, budgets have continued to shrink since the 1990s. Despite being one of only four NATO member states that still spends more than 2% of GDP on defence, real terms expenditure has continued to freefall as successive governments have pursued a strategy that favours elite tactical units over large-scale standing armies.^[2] To fill the gap, a controversial campaign to recruit 30,000 reservists has been used to ensure operational commitments are met around the world.

The UK's defence strategy bucks current trends for developed nations with major armies. As the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute points out, global military spending rose to \$1.8 trillion in 2018 which "is at the highest level in real terms since reliable records began in 1988, during

the cold war, and 76% higher than in 1998, when the world was enjoying its "peace dividend".^[3] While the UK's stricter budgeting has helped to balance the books, it has also, as General Sir Nick Carter argues, left the UK open to falling behind its 'potential enemies' unless there is additional investment.^[4]

Security issues aside, however, the UK now has a growing number of ex-military personnel entering a domestic job market that is currently experiencing unprecedented levels of employment. In February 2019 the Office for National Statistics reported 32.6 million people in work, a record high since estimations began in 1971.^[5] This has only added to the well-documented challenges that ex-military personnel face.

Successful transition from the military has long been regarded as a challenge. The removal of guaranteed accommodation, steady pay and the structure and camaraderie of a forces career leaves many struggling. The Veterans & Families Institute for Military Social Research asserts that the majority of literature on military leavers indicates most make a smooth transition, although there remains a 'substantial minority' that experience personal and professional difficulties. Accordingly, finding appropriate ways to support service personnel in making successful transition to civilian life is widely viewed as a priority for public policy and research.^[6] This view has never seemed more important. There are now more than 60,000 veterans in the UK who have broken the law, are homeless or are suffering with poor mental health.^[7] While these social problems are complex and deep-rooted, it is widely acknowledged

that support into steady civilian employment will alleviate much of the welfare challenge.^[8]

Despite a small but marked problem with resettlement, military leavers nonetheless offer untapped potential for businesses. UK military training is revered across the world and is known to culture a punctual attitude and strategic mindset, often making veterans ideal candidates for work in industries that share and value these skills. Facilities management is often regarded as a prime target for veterans in search of a new career, but why is this the case? Is the industry uniquely positioned to help veterans, as the anecdotal evidence suggests, or are there other factors that contribute to this trend? Moreover, what transferable skills do ex-military personnel hold that make them such a good fit for a career in FM?

Using insight from those who help transition ex-military personnel into civilian roles, as well as the recollections of those who have made the move themselves, in this report CTS will examine the military-to-civilian life challenge, FM's perceived career advantages, and question whether more formal structure is needed to help veterans re-establish their careers. The report's final chapter will offer advice for ex-military professionals looking for a role in the facilities management industry. In reading this report, it is hoped that serving military personnel will be better equipped to pursue a career in FM, while employers will be able to understand the experiences and potential offered by those exiting the armed forces.



Key facts and figures

(source: MOD 1 April 2019)

192,160

The total strength of UK forces service personnel is currently 192,160, representing a 1% decrease over the last 12 months

134,300

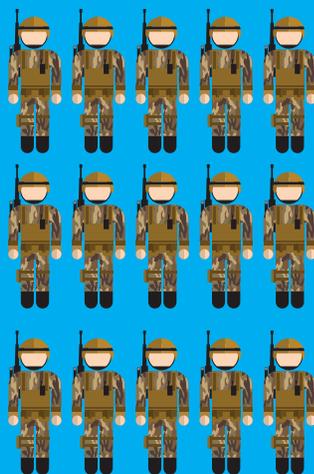
The 'full time trained strength' of the armed forces, all personnel that have completed full training, is currently 134,300

12,480

12,480 people joined the regular armed forces over the last 12 months, representing a 1% increase on the previous period

By contrast, 14,630 people left the military

14,630



x10

The reserves grew by 150 people between 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019

FOOT / NOTE

- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779859/201901_-_SPS.pdf
- <https://www.businessinsider.com/the-decline-of-the-uk-armed-forces-in-charts-2015-2?r=US&IR=T>
- <https://www.economist.com/international/2019/04/28/military-spending-around-the-world-is-booming>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42774738>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-47290331>
- <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0095327X16675965>
- <https://inews.co.uk/news/uk/armed-forces-veterans-homeless-crime-prison-mental-health/>
- 'The Social Impact of FM' RICS Strategic Facility Management Case Studies – Series 5, p.5.





THE CONTRIBUTORS

This report was written using the insight of six contributors who have a close connection with both the military and facilities management industry.



Jane Wiggins

Jane Wiggins is a tutor, lecturer and FM advocate. She has worked as an associate tutor for the Careers Transition Partnership for the last 14 years, advising hundreds of service leaders. Prior to this Jane held a number of senior FM and estate management roles, including positions at the BBC, British Airways, and the University of Winchester.



Ian Stacey

Ian Stacey joined the army in 1985 and left six years later as a Corporal. His military career saw him serve tours in Belize, twice in Northern Ireland totalling 3 years, and Cyprus. While transition to civilian life was initially a struggle, Ian found his feet after securing a maintenance role at Tetley. After six years and equipped with a wealth of FM knowledge, Ian then joined the BBC and Johnson Controls over a period of 14 years. Since 2015, he has been Head of Health, Safety and Security at the Zoological Society of London.



Mark Sutcliffe

Mark Sutcliffe was educated at the Royal Naval College in Dartmouth and then served as an officer for 10 years in the Royal Navy. His move over to 'civvy street' has involved a number of management and director roles in both small and large FM companies. Mark is currently managing director of the 'FM Integrator' at KBR UK and heads up the company's armed forces network, which focuses on recruitment of veterans and the spouses of ex-military professionals.



Chris Parkes

Chris Parkes's military life began early on with membership in both the boys' brigade and air cadets. While studying for an undergraduate degree in Geography, Chris was offered a flying scholarship in the air force but found his interests and skills better suited to the army. Upon graduating, Chris trained at Sandhurst and joined the army as a Second Lieutenant in The Royal Corps of Signals in 2002. After eight years, seven moves, two operational tours and multiple short secondments, Chris left having reached the rank of Captain. Chris' post forces career has involved a number of director-level roles in the facilities management industry. Chris is now managing director of Kanso FM, a business he founded in January 2019.



Louisa Clarke

Louisa Clarke served 10 years in the Royal Air Force as a Movements Controller. In this role, Louisa was responsible for in-bound and out-bound cargo, explosives and mail on military and civilian aircraft. Upon leaving the military in 2006, Louisa continued her logistics career as station manager at Durham Tees Valley Airport. Since 2011, she has worked for Churchill Group where she is currently operations director for the business's Scotland, North and Midlands regions.



Paul Symington

Paul Symington served over 27 years in the Royal Navy, leaving in 2003 having reached the rank of Warrant Officer. FM was a natural career progression for Paul, with his later naval career focusing on building management. Paul's final military project saw him setting up and overseeing a new administrative department in Portsmouth. He has a degree in FM from Sheffield Hallam University, where he has also recently submitted his MBA dissertation. He has held a number of different management and director level roles. He is currently head of FM for Southwark Council, where he has worked for the last six years.



PART ONE

THE MILITARY TO CIVILIAN LIFE CHALLENGE

Leaving the armed forces shares little with a civilian career move. It is a fundamental shift that relinquishes more than a salary and subsidised accommodation. It also sees people leaving a highly institutionalised lifestyle premised on rank, process and discipline.

While it is arguable that these qualities are all found in the civilian workplace, they are not often, as Jane Wiggins finds, treated with same degree of reverence: “What constitutes discipline in a corporate workplace would likely not pass in a military setting. Service leavers come from a mindset that gets the job done irrespective of other pressures,

which cannot always be said for ‘civvy street’.” It is this cultural change that Wiggins believes presents one of the biggest challenges for former MoD employees and is a view shared by former army Corporal Ian Stacey, who initially found life difficult outside of the army’s well-established structure. “I joined the forces at a young age,” says Stacey “and professionally it was all I knew. Upon leaving I found that civilian work was less rigid, with more choices which was difficult and I had to adjust accordingly.”

This cultural ‘rigidity’ is a common part of feedback Wiggins receives from employers that have hired her former students. “Businesses have said that it can sometimes take six months

for the ‘MoD chips’ to wear off some service leavers,” she says. “What’s meant here is a directness that is common in the military, an undiluted truth that can be misinterpreted as rude or insensitive within commercial businesses.” Former army officer Chris Parkes, believes that this approach can be attributed to the route that new recruits take at the beginning of their forces career. “Those who have gone through ‘conventional’ education and then joined the military,” Parkes notes, “tend to have more natural communication skills and a larger civilian network to call on when changing careers. Whereas those who have been brought up in a forces household and have then gone straight to army sixth form, for example, will be more culturally ingrained.”

One of the biggest challenges faced by the 16,000 people who leave the military every year is convincing employers that their skills and experiences are applicable in the business world

What is the Armed Forces Covenant?

Introduced in 2000, the Armed Forces Covenant is a term used to refer to the mutual obligation between the UK and its armed forces. It aims to safeguard service people, and their families, by ensuring they are treated with “fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve with their lives.”^[11] The covenant supports veterans by providing career advice, as well as help with housing, healthcare and education.

As the Guardian notes: “The phrase “military covenant” refers to the contract that is supposed to exist between servicemen and women and the civilians on whose behalf they are willing to die. It is an informal understanding, rather than a legally enforceable deal, but it is nevertheless treated with great seriousness within the services.”^[12] To date over 3,000 organisations and all 407 local authorities in mainland Great Britain have pledged to uphold the covenant.

The ‘softer’ side of management, however, is just one in a number of professional obstacles that veterans have to contend with when establishing a corporate career. For some time, it’s been recognised that military roles are often highly specialised without an obvious or direct commercial equivalent. This is a problem that is all too common for former Warrant Officer Paul Symington, who believes the public’s connection with the military has waned in recent years and, as a result, businesses are now unfamiliar with what veterans have to offer. “I would explain in interviews that I was a Warrant Officer. Companies would rarely understand what that meant or how it was connected to the job I was applying for. There is definitely a corporate education piece that needs addressing,” says Symington.

This view is one that journalist Sophie Smith expands on in an article for The Telegraph: “One of the biggest challenges faced by the 16,000 people who leave the military every year is convincing employers that their skills and experiences are applicable in the business world. Many will not have had a job



PROFILE
Chris Miller

Chris Miller joined the Royal Air Force as an electrical technician in September 2000. His career in avionics saw him working on Harrier Jump Jets at RAF Wittering, search and rescue helicopters at RAF Boulmer, Hawker Siddeley Nimrods at RAF Kinloss, and Tornados at RAF Lossiemouth. Chris' final role as a sergeant involved managing 20 aircraft engineers who worked on Eurofighter Typhoons.

Through Enhanced Learning Credits, an armed forces initiative that promotes life-long learning, Chris began remote studying for an Honours degree in sustainable development and renewable energy at the University of Highlands and Islands. This approach allowed Chris to complete course modules while serving overseas with the RAF, resulting in him being awarded Moray College UHI Higher Education Student of the Year in 2017.

Upon graduating in Stornoway Chris met his future boss at GSH, an engineering and facilities management company, and was offered a senior business development position. While this fortuitous meeting provided Chris direct contact with an influential figure in the industry, he nonetheless credits his 18-year RAF career as the main reason why he ended up with a civilian job so soon after leaving. "I was able to forge a new direction in life while still employed, there are not many jobs where you are able to do that."

interview since joining the forces as teenagers, may never have written a CV and are unlikely to have any experience in the industry they want to enter."^[9]

For Parkes, this issue highlights the importance of gaining qualifications while still serving. "Military personnel will usually have learned how to use a piece of equipment through the demonstration of others," he says, "as opposed to formal training which provides recognised certificates." This 'qualification gap' can mean that veterans are misrepresented as low-skilled workers, despite having operated some of the most advanced technology in the world. Parkes's concern is hardly new, though, even within FM industry. In October 2014, journalist Kevin Stanley covered military leavers for the IWFM's official publication Facilitate, then called FM World. The article quotes FM professional Rob Farman who finds that while the industry has a responsibility to explain what FM means to the uninitiated, military leavers must also demonstrate how their skills apply to civilian roles. In the same piece, Farman recalls how

one veteran had been responsible for coordinating mortar and air power alongside advancing infantry yet had failed to explain this unique skill when discussing potential career options. "Someone who can do that is quite incredible," adds Farman.^[10]

Untapped potential has long been seen as a shortcoming of both central government and the private sector. Efforts to combat this include a business toolkit commissioned by the Prince of Wales^[13] and, most notably, the Armed Forces Covenant. The latter sees the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board working alongside the single services, local government and charities to ensure that veterans "have the same access to government and commercial services and products as any other citizen."^[14] While this has been widely welcomed, there are still concerns that not enough is being done to provide military leavers with the necessary tools to prosper out of uniform. The Federation for Small Businesses, for example, released a report in June 2019 that recommended an "enhanced support package for those transitioning

FOOT NOTE

- 9 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2019/06/03/do-ex-soldiers-need-help-returning-civvy-street/>
- 10 <http://www.facilitatemagazine.com/features/feature-articles/military-precision/>
- 11 <https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/about/>
- 12 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2008/mar/04/defence.military>
- 13 <https://www.bitc.org.uk/resources-training/toolkits/capitalising-military-talent-everything-you-need-know-about-employing>
- 14 <https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/about/>
- 15 <https://www.fsb.org.uk/first-voice/why-military-service-leavers-could-be-ideally-suited-to-starting-their-own-business>





out of the armed forces, including a greater focus on the option of self-employment and the key skills needed to succeed in enterprise.”^[15]

Even for those who have secured gainful employment challenges can still arise. Team structure within the military bears little resemblance to its corporate counterpart, with some veterans finding the political dimension of civilian work difficult to adjust to. “Office politics and sensitivities around employee performance can be puzzling for those who have only known the military way,” says Wiggins. “Veterans will swap a hierarchy they recognise and honour for an entirely new approach with different rules,” she adds. Civilian work will also introduce some people to unionised workforces and dispute hearings. “There is no forces equivalent,” says Parkes. “Reviews are based on rank. If there is a performance issue, it is dealt with by a superior and there is no individual follow-up process,” he adds.

Alongside these professional differences is a significant personal adjustment. For some, like former army Corporal Ian Stacey, the move leaves a longing for the excitement and variety commonly found in a forces career: “Every day is different, and you have to keep on

your toes. You become addicted to the adrenaline rush of high-alert situations. It’s very difficult to find that kind of intensity in civilian life.” Wiggins corroborates this view, adding that some veterans find new roles pale in comparison to what came before. “Consider some of the recent major garrison projects, like Allenby Connaught,” says Wiggins. “These are major exercises that cross international borders and require the very best in project management. It’s hardly surprising that some find smaller, regional jobs unstimulating.”

Wiggins’s experience tutoring hundreds of military leavers has given her unique insight into the practical challenges that ex-forces personnel face. Sometimes veterans will have settled on a part of the UK and moved their family without having looked for local employment. “Some will also forget to factor in the commute as their old job was never more than five minutes away,” says Wiggins. Other considerations that are overlooked include medical care, dentistry and in-service benefits that become taxable once veterans leave.

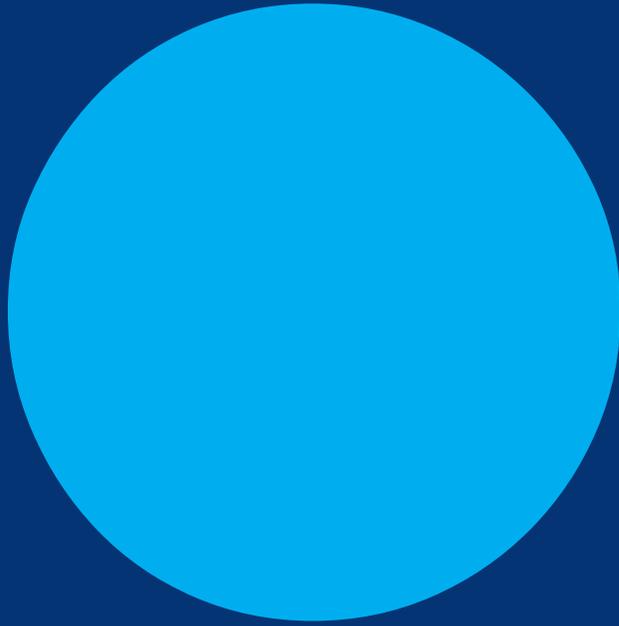
For some, however, the military bond runs deeper. As former RAF Movements Controller Louisa Clarke points out, the military will mean far more than employment for

certain people. “The military offers something more profound for those who have come from an unhappy home,” says Clarke “and the people you share your day with become family.” This fraternity is something that Stacey also recognises, even under what can often be extreme circumstances: “You can be in a very volatile part of the world, yet always have your comrades to rely on and share a joke with. Leaving that bond and unique humour behind can be a painful experience.”

It is clear that the military-civilian transition has plenty of potential stumbling blocks. Beyond a fundamental change in lifestyle, leavers will often have to manage a stressful family relocation alongside a job market that is unfamiliar with their broad skillset. Some, as Symington notes, will also experience social stigma that only further obstructs a successful transition. “There is currently a lot of press that focuses on PTSD after operational tours,” he says, “and this is causing some businesses to reconsider their commitment to hiring veterans.” However, Symington is also keen to add that this overlooks the underreported majority who resettle without any real difficulty. Wiggins shares this view: “Personally, I think the problem is overstated and only persists due to a perception among the general public and media,” she says. “The cultural elements are certainly challenging, and there are other problems to overcome, but many make it to civvy street without any difficulty. Tellingly, these people are often the most impressive and capable leaders within their new organisation.”

Not enough is being done to provide military leavers with the necessary tools to prosper out of uniform





PART TWO

FM'S ADVANTAGE

The military and FM industry are closely linked. In 2012 a survey conducted by the British Institute of Facilities Management, now the Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management, found that 10% of professionals polled had at some point worked for MoD,^[16] while QUEST, a magazine that covers the military-civilian transition, has an entire portal dedicated to the industry.^[17]

The links are so closely woven, in fact, that in July 2019 FM service provider Mitie announced its own military leavers job portal to encourage veterans to explore the options available to them.^[18] This move joins ISS, another FM company and Armed Forces Covenant signatory, which launched its own programme in 2013 to “fully engage with the talent pool leaving the armed forces every year”.^[19] There is also plenty of anecdotal evidence, according to Wiggins: “The industry is sold to leavers as an operational career, which creates immediate

connections for those who are unsure what ‘FM’ means. I’ve been helping veterans move into FM for many years, and I imagine that the industry figure is now much higher than the 10% that was reported in 2012.”

It is clear, then, that facilities management shares more than a casual connection with the armed forces. But why is this the case? What is it about the industry that so often makes it a logical next step for those leaving the military? This chapter explores the similarities and questions whether more support is needed help guide veterans into FM.

Adaptability

All contributors acknowledged that the armed forces instil adaptability, a vital skill for facilities managers. “Military training is focused on preparedness and the ability to cope with change,” says Clarke “and it is regularly called upon when working on an FM contract.” This is an opinion that is shared by former

naval officer Mark Sutcliffe, who now works for US-based company KBR. “Leadership is cultured from day one, as is problem solving and the ability to look at things laterally,” he says. “This approach is particularly useful for the management aspects of FM, where you will have to deal with large numbers of people and complex supply chains,” he adds.

As Wiggins is keen to point out, adaptability is not only a trained part of military life but also prerequisite for any role within the armed forces: “Conflict does not follow a set pattern. As such, military personnel will move post countless times throughout their career as an operational necessity. This capability is advantageous in an FM context, where everything is always subject to change.”

Logistics and strategy

As the International Facilities Management Association states, FM coordinates the built environment through people, place, process and technology.^[21] Much like the military, then, successful FM is heavily reliant on logistical expertise. “Some people might hear ‘logistics’ and think of warehouse management,” says Clarke. “In the air force, however, this means managing aircraft, cargo and crew throughout different parts of the world. Within most FM contracts it is essentially the same thing but on a much smaller scale.”

Sutcliffe finds that international work that is common within the military also lends itself to the more strategic parts of FM. “I work with one colleague whose military career involved ‘rebating’, essentially relocating 100,000 people from Germany back to the UK. This expertise is invaluable for cross-border FM, yet recruiters might overlook this because the term is vague outside of the forces.”

What is the Careers Transition Partnership?

The Careers Transition Partnership (CTP) is a partnering agreement with the Ministry of Defence and Right Management, a global career development and outplacement specialist to provide resettlement support. The CTP works across 10 different centres in the UK and Germany, helping military personnel find suitable employment in a second career. Provision of resettlement lasts up to two years before an individual is due to leave and continues for up to two years post discharge. Everyone that is ‘trained strength’ is eligible for advice.^[20]



PROFILE

Matthew Aitkin

Matthew Aitkin's connection with the forces began during higher education, when he was given a bursary from the army to study engineering. Around this time Matthew damaged his hearing, which meant he was unable to attend Sandhurst military academy upon completing university. Despite this he went on to serve in the territorial army for 24 years, retiring with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He served primarily with the Cadet Force.

Unlike others featured in this report, Matthew's military and corporate careers ran concurrently. This allowed him to apply military experience to his civilian work in FM and property management. "In one sense it has been very useful," he says, "in that you select a leader, consider others' opinions and then work collectively and decisively towards a goal. On the other hand, it has at times been challenging as some consider this approach too divisive for a corporate setting."

Like other contributors to this report, Matthew highlights the need for a different approach when working outside of defence: "Military life can be very black and white, whereas the corporate world is often shades of grey. You have to be tactful when transitioning from one to the other, especially for people like me who had a foot in both worlds." Matthew now works as a senior consultant for Advanced Workplace Associates.

Team management

From small tactical units to entire divisions, the armed forces is comprised of and run by people. Facilities management is no different in this respect. The team-based approach found within FM not only presents leavers with an obvious civilian parallel but also allows veterans to make good use of their team management skills. As Wiggins finds: "Good deployment is drilled into military professionals because people's lives will often depend on it. Veterans take a detailed knowledge of successfully functioning teams into their civilian career – something that is vital for any FM role."

Despite 'softer' management skills being overlooked in military training, for Parkes the ability to determine the 'best person for the job' more than redresses the balance: "Military success is dependent on matching the right people with the right roles, and as an officer you are taught how to do this from day one. This not only useful for FM but any corporate role that involves teams of people."

Veterans take a detailed knowledge of successfully functioning teams into their civilian career – something that is vital for any FM role

Existing knowledge

UK military training is not only internationally revered but, as Symington notes, is also applicable to life outside the forces: "The technical skills learned in the military are directly transferable to hard FM, while those who have worked in logistics and support, for example, will find a strong match with soft FM disciplines and even general business practices like procurement."

The broader commercial knowledge is something that Parkes has called upon when establishing his own

FOOT NOTE

- 16 <https://www.salutemyjob.com/veteran-employment-blog/filing-the-skills-gap-facilities-management>
- 17 <https://www.questionline.co.uk/careers/career/facilities-management>
- 18 http://www.facilitatemagazine.com/news/mitie-launches-initiative-to-support-armed-forces/?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_term=
- 19 <https://www.uk.issworld.com/cr/ourpeople/the-armed-forces-covenant>
- 20 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/career-transition-partnership>
- 21 <https://www.ifma.org/about/what-is-facility-management>





FM company, Kanso. “Whether knowingly or not, the forces gives you a solid understanding of contract management, financing and procurement. This knowledge partnered with the practical military experience has given me more than enough to set up an FM business.” Indeed, contract and estates expertise is something that Wiggins also draws attention to. “Up until recently, private finance initiatives and public-private partnerships were common instruments used to help build key military infrastructure,” she says, “this exposure not only familiarises service people with a common aspect of modern-day FM but also allows them to engage directly with potential employers.”

Is there enough support?

Statistics paint a grim picture for some ex-military personnel, leading some to believe there is insufficient support for those heading into civilian life. There is, however, a much greater number of unreported successes that contradict this view. For Sutcliffe, it is not so much a question of support but rather willingness for companies to engage with service leavers. “The forces gives you the opportunity to retrain and there are a number of routes that support with settlement,” he says, “FM, however, could do more to capitalise on the abundance of talent that leaves the forces each year. There has long been an engineering skills shortage in the UK – ex-military are an underexploited way to help close this gap.”

Wiggins, who is an authority on the topic of the military-civilian transition, believes today there is sufficient support but finds equal

representation to be lacking: “There is now proven structure in place to help service leavers, though I do have concerns around the low numbers of women considering FM courses and careers via CTP. This part of the process should be improved.” Stacey concurs, finding the stereotypical view of ex-military personnel more obstructive than any lack of formal assistance: “At this stage, I think it is more a question of education. The process has clearly improved since I left, but misunderstandings persist. Businesses need to know what veterans can offer and how their skills are transferable and can be applied positively, while leavers need to know how to properly sell themselves to an employer.”

It is clear, then, that ex-military personnel have the skills necessary to quickly assimilate into facilities management. Notwithstanding concerns around a lack of diversity and engagement, respondents also contend that there is enough structure for personnel to make a successful transition into FM.

FM could do more to capitalise on the abundance of talent that leaves the forces each year

Much like the armed forces, FM is an umbrella term for many different disciplines which makes it highly accommodating for veteran jobseekers. However, this affinity goes beyond broad similarities.

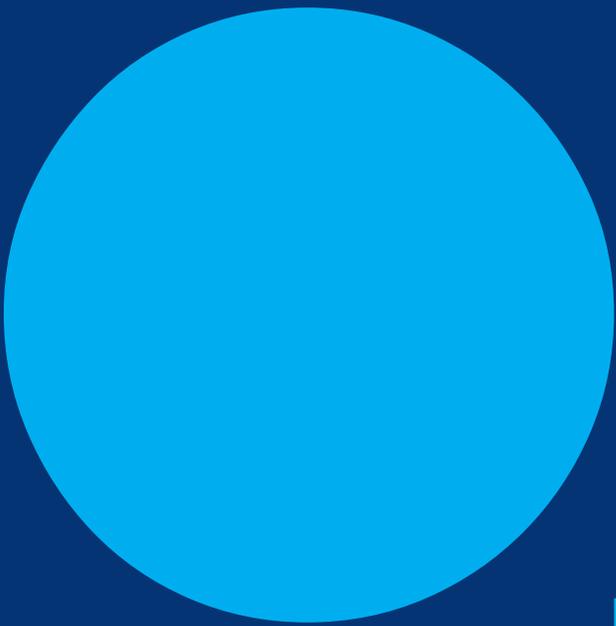
As Symington points out, what is considered ‘FM’ in the civilian world merely goes by a different name within the armed forces. “You soon discover that trades are largely the same,” he says, “and they share the ultimate goal of making an organisation as efficient as possible. Confusion persists because one is a national institution and the other is typically private enterprise.” This view again underlines the need for clear communication during interview stages that was covered in chapter one. “Whether knowingly or not, I often find that veterans know more about FM than they let on,” Sutcliffe adds, “even though these people are often exactly what service providers are looking for.”





PART THREE

A NEW LIFE IN FM



Moving out of uniform can be a daunting experience, but it need not be. With the right preparation and knowledge, ex-military personnel can quickly establish a successful civilian career. As this report has shown, facilities management is an accommodating industry for a broad range of different skills and capabilities that are developed in the forces. This final chapter offers advice from report contributors for those who are either serving their notice or considering a move into FM.



Jane Wiggins

“My first piece of advice would be to look into CTP’s Potential Facilities Management course and the IWDM Level four facilities management courses at Aldershot. These are unique and, in my opinion, the best at equipping people with the knowledge necessary to succeed in FM. I would also recommend planning the transition long before notice is given. This will give you and your family time to find your feet and, most importantly, minimise the impact of a fundamental change in lifestyle. Your circumstances will inevitably change as you move closer to your leave date but I cannot overstate the importance of planning and preparation. As with all things in life, those who are proactive fare better than those who leave it to chance. Finally, use your notice period to acquire useful qualifications and establish prospects by networking as much as you can.”



Chris Parkes

“Actively contribute to the industry and network regularly. This does not have to be in person, as sometimes it might not be possible when serving in remote parts of the world. You can still build professional bridges by engaging online through social media and other forums. I know many former colleagues who, despite having impressive CVs, have not made full use of the digital options available to them and have then struggled upon leaving the forces. Networking serves a dual purpose. Not only does it get your name out there but it also allows you to soften the ‘militaristic’ parts of your personality and prepare for the corporate world. Finally, believe in yourself and know your worth.”



Ian Stacey

“FM is the ideal industry for ex-military transitioning to civilian life. Research and understand how your current skills apply. If you believe there are gaps in your CV, try to fill those while serving your notice and ensure that these are qualified with recognised certification. Have confidence in your abilities and use the military’s training to your advantage, as your skills are very much transferable. That said, be open to change, embrace new technology and new ways of working that you might not have come across before.”



PROFILE

Scott Hudson



Scott joined the army upon leaving school in 1994. As a Grenadier Guard he patrolled Buckingham Palace and the Tower of London, as well as serving two tours of Northern Ireland as an infantry soldier. Scott also participated in major military exercises in Germany, Holland and France.

Upon his discharge in 1998, Scott joined Corps Security for seven years. After a short period working self-employed, he returned to Corps as site security manager. During this time, he worked with telecoms provider Orange at its headquarters in Bristol. This position brought him into contact with the in-house FM team. Following Orange's merger with T-Mobile Scott was then headhunted by the newly formed EE to become its full-time facilities manager. Finding himself more attuned with the security industry, however, Scott once again returned to Corps where he has remained ever since.

Scott left the forces with no qualifications and only a handful GCSEs. Joining straight from school also meant that he was ineligible for formal careers support. Despite this, he forged a successful career and looks back on his forces experience with fondness: "I learned how to apply myself and make the most of my ability. It provided the foundations for a successful career in security."



Louisa Clarke

"There is no reason why an ex-military professional should doubt their chances of success. The industry has something for everyone, no matter their career history. My advice would be to research as much as you can before leaving the forces. Decide what part of the industry interests you most and then look for a company that shares your values. The work is challenging, making it a great fit who people who thrive in high pressure situations. It is also rewarding with plenty of opportunities to test your capabilities and further your career. Above all, the industry allows you to make a difference to people's lives. In that sense, it is an ideal next step for those who have helped to make the world a safer place."



Mark Sutcliffe

"Qualification is key. It demonstrates a willingness to learn new skills while serving and will fill any gaps in knowledge before interview. Make good use of advice from charities, like the Officer's Association, who will be able to appraise your CV and suitability for certain roles. Reach out to organisations who have transition programmes and find potential mentors who can assist your move into FM. The industry is rich with possibilities and support for those who want to want to make a difference."



Paul Symington

"FM requires a solid application of everything learned in the military. I believe this makes it an ideal match for veterans, as they are typically people who enjoy the challenge of something new. Engage with former colleagues and determine where you believe you can make a difference, but also identify areas your skills can be tested. Finding that balance will keep you interested."



CONCLUSION

The military provides FM organisations with access to a wealth of capable, highly trained talent. As contributors to this report have shown, veterans will typically hold a number of directly transferable skills that make them ideal candidates for senior FM positions. They are strategically adept, adaptable, and, despite sometimes needing an adjustment in managerial style, able to build high-performing teams.

Veterans who have come from a technical background also offer businesses access to sorely needed engineering talent. The importance of this cannot be overstated in a time when most estimations predict the 'gap' to worsen in coming years. Above all, ex-military personnel have natural business acumen and a strong work ethic that offers FM organisations immediate impact upon hiring. This is invaluable in a competitive job market.

The military-civilian transition is challenging, but FM offers veterans a direct point of entry to successful civilian life. The industry is diverse and truly international, making it an ideal home for veterans looking to exit defence yet still work in an industry that plays to their strengths. If we are to accept that stable employment is the primary driver for successful reintegration, the risk that ex-military present to FM companies is virtually non-existent.

Facilities management is heavily reliant on people. The issue of attracting and retaining 'the next generation' is a permanent feature at industry events and conferences. In this respect, ex-military professionals are underexploited resource in need of closer attention. A renewed focus on veteran recruitment will not only secure the industry's future but also have a wider positive impact on society.



RECOMMENDED READING

Armed Forces Covenant <https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk>

Careers Transition Partnership <https://www.ctp.org.uk>

CTP Facilities Management <https://www.ctp.org.uk/resettlement-training/>

Enhanced Learning Credits <http://www.enhancedlearningcredits.com>

VETS <https://www.veteranemployment.co.uk>

Quest <https://www.questonline.co.uk>

Courses 4 Forces <http://www.bulldogpublishing.co.uk/?id=15>

Pathfinder International <http://pathfinderinternational.co.uk>

Officers' Association <https://www.officersassociation.org.uk>



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