

Snapshot t education & training

Snapshot *Noun* [c] (UNDERSTANDING)

A piece of information or short description that gives an understanding of a situation at a particular time

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**A plain language summary of research and evidence
relating to the UK Armed Forces and veteran
community**

(Updated May 2021)

Produced by the FiMT Research Centre



About the Forces in Mind Trust Research Centre

[The Forces in Mind Trust Research Centre](#) was established in October 2017 within the [Veterans & Families Institute for Military Social Research](#) at Anglia Ruskin University. The Centre curates the [Veterans & Families Research Hub](#), provides advice and guidance to research-involved stakeholders and produces targeted research and related outputs. The Centre is funded by the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT), which commissions research to contribute to a solid evidence base from which to inform, influence and underpin policymaking and service delivery.

About Snapshots

Snapshots are designed to aid understanding of complex issues in relation to the Armed Forces (AF), and to support decision-making processes by bridging gaps between academic research, government and charitable policy, service provision and public opinion. Snapshots are aimed primarily at those working in policymaking and service provision roles for the AF, and might also be useful to those seeking facts, figures, and informed comment to empower a more objective discussion among the wider population, including the AF community and the media. The purpose of these Snapshots is to review and interpret research and policy, and to set out brief, plain language summaries to ease understanding and perception.

The FiMT Research Centre has produced a range of Snapshots covering many of the main themes and topics relating to the AF, veteran, and associated families community. Due to frequent research and policy changes, Snapshots will be updated regularly to maintain their relevance. Contributions and [comment](#) are welcome via the [Veterans & Families Research Hub](#), where the Snapshots are hosted.

While these summaries are produced using recognised research processes, they are written for a lay audience and cover only a selection of academic and [grey](#) (unpublished or non-commercial) literature relating to UK AF issues. While searches have been conducted by reviewing electronic databases and references from relevant articles and reports, as well as a review of websites provided by government and other appropriate organisations, our Snapshots are not intended to present every available source of literature and information source on the subject under consideration.

Version and authors

Based on an original version published by Dr Linda Cooper and Kristina Fleuty of FiMT Trust Research Centre in 2019, this current version was updated in May 2021 by Dr Graham Cable, Kristina Fleuty and Professor Michael Almond from the Forces in Mind Trust Research Centre.

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1 Introduction and definitions

This Snapshot focuses on summarising provision of support for ‘elective’ educational and training opportunities for the UK Armed Forces (UK AF) community (serving personnel, veterans and families of both), along with how military ‘mandatory’ training can be accredited to civilian qualifications (see definitions below). Additionally, it signposts key research on issues that might affect this provision, along with concerns related to the education of partners and children of AF members.

The following terms are used in this Snapshot and are defined as follows (further terms and their definitions are [here](#)):

- The UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) defines ‘**education**’ as the ‘development of intellectual capacity, the acquisition of general supporting Knowledge [sic]’ (p. 12).
- ‘**Training**’ is a process of teaching and learning a specific skill or behaviour, often supported by recalling and applying facts.
- ‘**Mandatory**’ education and training refers to that which UK military personnel undertake as part of their career-specific roles and development.
- The term ‘**elective**’ training and education refers to courses available to military personnel on a voluntary basis, for which a personal financial contribution is often required.
- In this Snapshot, ‘**accreditation**’ is defined as ‘the gaining of a whole or partial civilian qualification’ through recognition of mandatory military education and training (p. 199).
- The term ‘**transition**’ is used to describe the period of (re)integration into civilian life from the AF. For the purposes of this Snapshot, it starts from the point during a period of military engagement at which serving personnel begin their resettlement process, which can continue for several years after the point they leave the armed forces.
- ‘**Resettlement**’ describes the formal processes and procedures by which military-to-civilian transition is managed, and the formal support provided to AF leavers during this transition. It starts with the activation of the resettlement process and continues until the end of resettlement support provision.
- The MOD definition of a ‘veteran’ is anyone who has ‘served for at least one day in Her Majesty’s Armed Forces (Regular or a Reserve)’.
- For distinctions between ‘**Regular**’ and ‘**Reservist**’ AF roles and commitments, please see example [British Army definitions](#).
- For distinctions between ‘**commissioned**’ and ‘**non-commissioned**’ ranks, please see [here](#) (although a United States explanation, it broadly equates to the [British Army](#) system and equivalents in the [Royal Navy](#) and [Royal Air Force](#))

2 Methods

For the original Snapshot, a review was undertaken of the available evidence concerning serving personnel and veterans' education and training issues relating to the UK, using standard reviewing techniques such as searching electronic databases, and hand searching of references from relevant articles and reports and a review of websites from government and relevant organisations. The review was limited to studies undertaken since the release of the first [FiMT Transition Mapping Study](#) and drew upon existing literature reviews for pre-2013 studies.

This 2021 version (Version 2) supplements the above by considering relevant research conducted and reported on since the original version's publication in 2019, along with pertinent policy updates and developments, with the addition of material not included in the original version.

Due to the use of hyperlinks in this report, all references cited are restricted to those openly available online.

It is recommended that this Snapshot is read in conjunction [with the others](#) in this series, as many of the themes presented are linked in them.

3 Educational and training support while serving

3.1 Mandatory education and training

The MOD [states](#) that opportunities to gain nationally recognised civilian qualifications through accreditation of education, training and experience are important due to their positive impact on recruiting, retention and resettlement. Consequently, it directs that accreditation is 'to be sought for all mandatory military training and education' (p. 199). Additionally, the UK Government has set [statutory guidance](#) for the AF 'to employ an average of at least 2.3% of their staff as new apprentice starts'. Accordingly, the [Royal Navy](#) (RN), the [Army](#) and [Royal Air Force](#) (RAF) are required to underpin this guidance with the provision of '[apprenticeships](#)', which allow for military mandatory training to be linked to the acquisition of qualifications up to foundation, Bachelor's and Master's degrees or professional equivalents. The Army, as an example, advertises itself as '[one of the largest apprenticeship employers in the UK](#)', with around 43,000 members on one of 43 programmes at any one time, and indicates [many of its training courses are now accredited by a range of providers offering a range of civilian qualifications](#). In 2020, the Army was judged to have come first in a list of the '[Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers](#)', having helped over '8,000 apprentices gain new skills' in 2019-2020 with almost a fifth of its members on apprenticeships programmes. The RN and RAF were not far behind in third and tenth place, respectively.

Much of this learning and accreditation provision comes at no cost to the individual undergoing training, and is offered either through the [Defence Awarding Organisation](#) or [other awarding bodies](#), such as those indicated via the Army's '[Accreditation Offer](#)'. In addition, it is [MOD policy](#) that, where practicable, military training should be 'mapped entirely, or in part, against the training and education requirements of a professional body' (p. 201), thereby enabling serving personnel achieve membership at varying levels. However, it should be noted that the offer of full apprenticeships to members of the Reserve Forces 'is not possible' due to their differing terms of service (p. 211), [while other accreditation offers can also vary accordingly](#).

3.2 Functional skills and Specific Learning Difficulties support

Although a minimum recruitment standard applies, serving personnel can receive ‘[functional skills](#)’ (FS) support in English, mathematics (literacy and numeracy) and information communications technology (ICT) as part of apprenticeship or other training provision. Furthermore, fully or part-funded help with [Specific Learning Difficulties](#) (SpLD) such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia is also available (as SpLD are not necessarily a barrier to recruitment and their recognition can emerge in-service, but it should be noted support differs according Regular and Reserve status). Specialist help is also available for those whose first language is not English, including for family members of serving personnel.

[Research commissioned by the MOD](#) and published in 2012 indicated that up to 50% of the Army’s 8,000 recruits in 2010 joined with literacy and numeracy skills below the equivalent of a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grades 4-1 ([under the system operating in England](#)), while only 1-3% of RN and RAF recruits registered below these grades. According to the [report](#), this reflected differences between the ‘size and share across the Services of technical trades (e.g. engineering) that demand higher qualification entry requirements’ and the recruitment of ‘foreign nationals’ with ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) needs (p. 7). Although not stated, it is assumed the research was conducted among Regular AF personnel only.

According to answers to questions posed to MOD ministers by [members of the UK Parliament](#), in 2019 the Army admitted 20 recruits with a reading age of between five and seven; 220 between seven and nine, and 760 between nine and 11. The RAF had none below 11 and the RN did not assess recruits’ reading ages (numbers rounded to the nearest 10). Further responses indicated that recruits to the Army were permitted to join with the lowest reading ages on the understanding that they sought support to bring them up to the next level prior to commencing military training. It was additionally indicated that no recruits had joined the AF with the lowest level at the time of reporting in 2020, and that all military personnel undertaking an apprenticeship are ‘required to attempt to gain a Functional Skills (FS) Level 2 award in literacy and numeracy — equivalent to at least a Grade 4 at GCSE level’. Again, it is not clear if these figures related to both Regular and Reserve personnel, but the assumption is the former only

3.3 Postgraduate education

The [Defence Academy](#) (DefAc) is the main provider of postgraduate qualifications, but other providers are engaged with DefAc advice. The [External Placements \(Academic\) Programme has recently been established](#) to offer a variety of full or part-funded and full or part-time academic placements to qualifying AF personnel. Like its forerunner, the [Higher Defence Studies Programme](#), which was open to all ranks of the Regular and Reserve AF, it is assumed this remains the case with its successor.

3.4 Language Awards

The MOD offers ‘[Language Awards](#)’ in the form of a financial reward to encourage Regular and some Reserve AF personnel to ‘obtain military language competences that are related to the needs of the Services’, and are awarded to those who ‘demonstrate an appropriate level of foreign language proficiency’ by undergoing an MOD ‘Language Assessment Board’ or ‘Multi-Level Assessment’, with

a view to recording that proficiency and having it used if required (p. 13 - 6 - 1). Courses are offered through the [Defence Centre for Language and Culture](#), based at the DefAc (see above).

3.5 Elective training and education support

Aside from the above mandatory and voluntary education and training provision, other elective opportunities are made available, usually implying a financial contribution from those wishing to undertake them. Courses and accreditation are offered by a wide range of civilian private and public providers, institutions and professional bodies, for which a proportion of costs can usually be offset using the [Standard](#) (SLC) and [Enhanced Learning Credits](#) (ELC) schemes, as follows:

3.5.1 Standard Learning Credits Scheme

SLCs refund both Regular and Reserve personnel up to 80% of eligible and off-duty 'multiple, small-scale' training and educational course/examination/support (e.g., SpLD) costs, but only once completed in the case of courses/certifications (or with evidence of satisfactory attendance if courses last more than a year) up to a maximum of £175 per year (in all but exceptional operational or compassionate circumstances when some retrospective claiming may be allowed). The MOD's rationale for such 'burden sharing' support is that it is in recognition of the mutual benefit that personal development offers the AF member and the AF more widely ([p. 214](#)).

3.5.2 Enhanced Learning Credits Scheme

ELCs provide a greater (but time-limited) funding stream for the achievement of 'a nationally recognised qualification at Level 3' (on the English, Northern Irish and Welsh [qualifications system](#)) or above (or equivalent in [Scotland](#)). In contrast to SLCs, the ELC scheme is not applicable to Reserves, and is a refund scheme, which can be used to pay, in advance and direct to training/educational providers, for up to 80% of course costs up to a maximum of £2000 per year, for up to three (consecutive or non-consecutive) years on the 'higher tier'. On the 'lower tier', payments are up to £1000 per year for three years, or one payment of £3000 (also available to those qualifying for the higher tier). For both tiers, personnel must have served for a specified periods of time as detailed in [MOD policy](#), and the range of eligible courses is limited in comparison to SLCs. ELCs payments cannot be combined with SLCs for the same course.

3.5.3 Standard and Enhanced Learning Credits Scheme take-up

Despite both schemes offering '[a good way to improve skills during a Service career and enhance employment prospects after leaving](#)' (p. 68), [figures presented in 2014](#) indicated only a small number of registered personnel in all Services took advantage of their ELC entitlements (except in the case of ELC take-up by those in their last two years of service, where the figure rose from 25% to 56%). SLC claims were especially low, with just above 8% take-up. ELC take-up [appears to have increased](#) slightly since then, and although increasing, SLC take-up is still reportedly [low](#) (and it is indicated anecdotally by the MOD that both SLC and ELC use is likely to have been impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic from 2020 also, an enduring situation at the time of this Snapshot's publication).

3.6 Resettlement and transition support

The MOD considers preparation for future transition from 'full-time' AF service as '[a moral obligation](#)' (p. i). Accordingly, it offers a 'comprehensive' resettlement and 'ongoing employment support' package (p. i), with some form of assistance provided to all Regular personnel and some Reserve members from up to two years prior to discharge to two years after ([or earlier for longer serving personnel](#)) (p. i) and [for the working life of all in the case of dedicated employment advice](#)). In-service and immediate post-service resettlement assistance is offered through a network of advisors and the [Career Transition Partnership](#) (CTP), with provision including briefings, workshops, training courses, familiarisation visits and leave periods; the extent of which depends on length of service and reasons for leaving (see the [Tri-Service Resettlement Policy](#) for full details). Those preparing to leave the Regular AF, and some Reservists doing the same, can also access an '[Individual Resettlement Training Costs](#)' (IRTC) grant if they have served for six or more years or are leaving on medical grounds. This grant offers up to £534 to cover non-funded training costs at the UK military's '[Resettlement Training Centre](#)', or at one of the [Regional Resettlement Centres](#). It can also be used to undertake training with CTP '[Preferred](#)' and other training providers. While any examination or registration fees are not covered by this grant, [IRTC can be used in combination with SLC](#) to offset the 20% personal financial contribution that would normally be required under the SLC scheme. No other MOD funding combinations are permitted, however.

Aspects of this resettlement support can be transferred to an [eligible partner or other 'nominated proxy'](#) in the case of an AF member's medical incapacity or death (p. 38).

It should be noted that attendance on CTP-provided services is not compulsory and subsequently some personnel leave the AF having never accessed this form of support. The [most recent CTP statistics](#) suggested that 21% of Regular personnel who left the AF in the financial year 2018/19 did not use a CTP service, however, reasons for this were not offered.

The MOD is also implementing a 'Life Skills' training package to be instituted throughout a Regular AF member's career (and for some categories of Reserve service where applicable), in preparation for their transition at the end of their period of service ([see p. 8](#)).

3.7 Barriers to take-up of elective education and training opportunities

[Research with Service Leavers over the age of 50](#), published in 2020, suggested that many struggle to undertake personal development activities due to demanding workloads, particularly when stationed overseas. Additionally, the [2017 Transition Mapping Study](#) indicated that a lack of commanders' commitment to ensuring their subordinates can take advantage of personal development opportunities was also a barrier to take-up, an issue echoed in [findings from Scotland published in 2020](#).

A [report published in 2019](#) highlighted areas in which current resettlement provision may not be meeting the needs of all female AF members, recommending that resettlement activity be tailored more for their differing requirements, such as focusing on flexible working. Furthermore, [research](#) published in April 2020 considered Senior Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCOs) preparing to leave the AF, finding that among those who were reluctant to leave, some were also reluctant to undertake resettlement activity. Additional barriers to engagement with the resettlement process

reported by SNCO veterans included a lack of satisfaction with the courses available, difficulties accessing training courses in some geographic locations, and a lack of support from commanding officers as indicated above. The report recommended that the MOD should consider making transition workshops compulsory for those leaving.

3.8 Satisfaction

MOD statistics from 2020 indicated that almost 60% of AF personnel were satisfied with their opportunities for personal and professional development, with 21% dissatisfied. Commissioned officers were more likely to be satisfied than other ranks (71% compared to 57%).

4 Support for veterans and family members in education

4.1 Veterans

4.1.1 SLC and ELC entitlement for veterans

Entitlement to SLC finishes when the individual leaves the AF, unless ‘deferred’ beyond that point (see MOD policy, [p. 217](#)), or in exceptional circumstances, such as death in service, where an entitlement can be transferred to an AF member’s partner. In contrast, ELCs can be used by a Regular veteran for up to five or 10 years after having left the AF (dependent on date of enrolment and circumstances of departure — see [here](#) for more details), and can be transferred to an ‘eligible adult dependant’ or other ‘proxy’ in the event of an AF member’s death or incapacity ‘which is caused either wholly or predominantly by service’ (see MOD policy, [p. 229](#)). A 10-year post-service claim period also applies in the event of the medical discharge of an AF member, but in all cases is subject to qualifying criteria in accordance with the MOD policy stated above.

4.1.2 Further and higher education for veterans: studying and working

Those within two years of leaving the AF (or having served for lengthy periods) who are registered under the ELC scheme (so Regulars only) can access the Publicly Funded Further and Higher Education scheme to fund a first full Level 3 qualification (two A-Levels or vocational equivalent under the English, Northern Irish and Welsh qualifications system or equivalent in Scotland) or a first Higher Education (HE) qualification (all offered by providers registered with the ELC scheme). This scheme allows for tuition fees paid in full by public funds where applicable (and up to specified limits), for the duration of the course, and for up to 10 years after leaving the AF (if the relevant qualification is achieved within that period). This scheme is available to UK-based personnel who have completed at least four years’ Service and who left on or after 17 July 2008 (additional qualifying criteria can be viewed [here](#)). Entitlement can be transferred to an eligible spouse or partner in the event of the Service person’s death, or if their medical discharge means they are unable to use the scheme. While no take-up figures have been published, the Welsh Government reported it extended £131,891 of funding under this scheme during 2018-2019.

According to the MOD, the rationale for the above scheme is to ‘build on the extensive range of professional and personal development opportunities made available’ during a military career, as well as to incentivise preparation for civilian life and work by undertaking qualifications which

‘benefit the nation’ (p. 241). The Access to Higher Education Diploma (AHED) is an underpublicised route into HE among the AF community according to [a report published in 2016](#), which noted that support provided under the auspices of the CTP made ‘little or no mention of university’ (p. 69). However, studying for the AHED is eligible for the ELC and Publicly Funded Further and Higher Education schemes, as well as other potential funding support. In common with [other educational experiences](#), study programmes such as the AHED can help build transition confidence and resilience, especially with the added pressure of illness or injury, according to the same [report](#).

The [Further Forces Programme](#), delivered and funded in partnership with the Education and Training Foundation and the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, aims to retrain AF leavers to teach technical subjects, including science, engineering and technology. This programme focuses on the need to create a world class technical education system and helps to address the [skills shortage](#) in these subject areas. The programme is delivered by the University of Portsmouth and the University of Brighton, to train and mentor veterans to work as Further Education (FE) teachers and trainers across England.

The [Troops to Teachers](#) programme is open to Regular AF veterans who have served for over four years and are within five years of leaving the AF, and who do not already hold a degree level qualification. Veterans are paid a tax-free bursary of up to £40,000 to study for an undergraduate degree leading to secondary education level qualified teacher status (England only) in biology, physics, chemistry, computing, maths or modern foreign languages. In Scotland, the University of Strathclyde is developing a pathway for [AF leavers with Higher National Diploma qualifications to enter initial teacher education programmes](#).

In addition, universities such as [The Open University](#) fund scholarships for disabled veterans to study for both undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications, while other universities (such as the [University of Portsmouth](#)) and FE colleges offer programmes specifically targeted at the AF community. However, this specific targeting and support for veterans is far from universal among FE and HE institutions in the UK. While seemingly more advanced in [Scotland](#), efforts to further develop ‘[veteran-friendly](#)’ institutions across the UK continue, in concert with international examples and stimulated by the far greater resource and concentration of effort in the United States.

The same [research](#) pointed not just to the benefits of attracting student veterans, but also in employing veterans. These benefits are promoted by the UK Government by encouraging businesses, charitable and public sector organisations to sign the [Armed Forces Covenant](#), to demonstrate their commitment to supporting the AF community by providing employment and other opportunities to them. While many [education and training providers have signed the Covenant](#), a [2019 report](#) recommended raising awareness both of the Covenant and the benefits to organisations of employing veterans, partly by encouraging participation in the [Defence Employer Recognition Scheme \(ERS\)](#). This scheme aims to encourage not just the employment veterans, but also their family members (it also encourages recognition of the value of employing serving Reservists, as well as flexibility in accommodating their military obligations).

The importance of encouraging FE and HE options for transitioning and veteran AF members is recognised by the [Scottish Government](#), who have developed a ‘Network of Champions for Further and Higher Education’ (p. 24) (further described [here](#)). In addition, and whereas military

qualifications have hitherto traditionally been mapped to the [English civilian equivalents](#), a [project to map military qualifications to the Scottish system](#) began in 2018.

4.2 Educational and training support for families of serving personnel and veterans

4.2.1 Support for partners

In 2014, [The Veterans' Transition Review](#) recommended that families have greater access to MOD-provided resettlement support, recognising that they also are transitioning alongside the AF family member. According to the Review, such support should include 'online educational modules' and employment advice (p. 139). In 2015, the [Spousal Employment Support Trial](#) was launched to offer AF members' partners careers workshops and a training grant of £879 'to pursue employment-related training in their chosen field' (p. 6). After an evaluation of the trial, it was [reported](#) that half of those who took part in the trial used the grant to undertake a training course, with a largely positive effect (however [a later study](#) reported the potential for that 'benefit in kind' to be liable for taxation [p. 98]). In October 2020, the CTP launched a new fully funded employment support programme for military family members, the [Partner Career Support Programme](#), which provides support to partners of Regular (and some Reserve) AF members who have served for more than four years. The programme includes career coaching and online training resources.

A [2019 study](#) conducted among RN families indicated that the absence of AF members from the family home made it difficult for those remaining behind to accommodate childcare and their own education and training (see [here](#) and [here also](#)), which particularly affected the junior rates/ranks. A [report](#) published the following year suggested promoting access to HE courses and recognising prior learning and qualifications might help in that respect. [According to a 2016 study](#), one route into HE for partners of AF members might be the previously mentioned AHED, but it also noted that military life could present barriers for partners of AF personnel. In response, the report recommended that the Publicly Funded Further and Higher Education scheme outlined above should be made available to partners.

[Research published in 2018](#) recommended that partners take advantage of HE institutions' efforts to offer distance learning opportunities, perhaps supported by MOD/provider partnerships (the pandemic experienced at the time of writing is likely to have boosted the availability and perhaps quality of distance learning, but it is too early to assess its impact). The same report further recommended that training programmes and initiatives need to be better tailored to the needs of the AF partner community, thereby increasing this community's inclusion (e.g. by considering childcare needs and access requirements of AF members and families assigned in overseas' locations).

4.2.2 Support and issues for school age children

The MOD's [Directorate Children and Young People](#) (DCYP) seeks to ensure that children of AF members suffer no disadvantage due to their parents' AF status (in the spirit of the [Armed Forces Covenant](#)). Under it, the [Children's Education Advisory Service](#) provides advice, support and guidance concerning the educational wellbeing of children of AF families, including those based overseas. According to its UK Government [website](#), the DCYP is staffed by qualified teachers and experienced case advisors who can offer guidance on matters such as special educational needs and

disability (SEND); schools' admissions and appeals (in the event places are not available in preferred schools); education in non-MOD schools while serving overseas; and the 'Continuity of Education Allowances' (CEA). According to the MOD, the latter exists to assist Regular (and some categories of Reserve) personnel to 'achieve continuity of education for their children that would otherwise be denied in the state sector due to the mobility of their family' (p. 14 - 1 - 1). As such, it covers most costs of sending AF members' children to 'independent' schools (those not directly funded by the UK Government, otherwise known as private schools), and other additional costs such as those associated with SEND, or in overseas locations where no MOD school exists (including early years education). In most cases, these independent schools offer boarding facilities, as they will be distant from the AF member's duty station. Strict criteria apply in claiming CEA, and there have been cases of members of the AF being prosecuted for fraudulent use.

According to MOD statistics from 2020, just over half of AF families have at least one child of school age, and 12% of those (predominantly those with a Commissioned Officer parent) receive CEA, which can be viewed as contentious. The 2020 report also indicates that 23% of families with school age children stated they experienced difficulties with their children's schooling in the last year, further indicating that children who changed school for reasons related to AF service 'are more likely to experience difficulties with their children's education (44%) than those who changed schools for other reasons' (p. 14). While a review commissioned by the UK's Defence Minister reported that there were around 76,000 AF children in English schools in 2018, a previous study conducted under the auspices of the Children's Commissioner for England indicated that it is difficult to estimate the number of AF children in education as it is not mandatory for AF members to 'declare' their children (p. 17).

In addition to the above allowances, the 'Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship' provides post 16 education scholarships to AF community children in the event an AF parent dies in circumstances attributable to AF service, with the aim of giving those children a 'head start in life by enabling them to progress in their post 16 education' (p. 1). The Welsh Government contributed £68,550 to support students of the scholarship scheme during the financial year 2018-2019.

A study into the educational attainment of children of Army members, published in 2014, found that these pupils in the later stages of secondary education achieved lower English attainment scores as compared to non-Army pupils, and that a majority had additional support needs related to frequent school moves and parental absence. The 2018 Children's Commissioner report referred to above echoed these additional support needs, emphasising that multiple school moves (including overseas) and frequent parental absences due to deployment or working away from home (sometimes of more than one parent at the same time) can disrupt relationships and schooling (see here and here also), resulting in some AF children feeling anxious and exacerbating the situation for those with additional educational needs (see this report also, which notes that efforts to mitigate SEND mobility issues have begun). While the Armed Forces Covenant aims to alleviate some of the disadvantage surrounding frequent moves (as does the provision of CEA as mentioned previously), the study additionally found that accommodating AF schoolchildren in some schools can be difficult. Later research highlighted issues arose due also to differing curricula among schools, particularly given the vast differences between the educational system in Scotland and the rest of the UK. As a result, research published in 2019 indicated that some RN members opted to 'weekend' (to work at some distance from the family home and stay in accommodation local to it during the week, only returning

to the family home at weekends and for holidays). Despite these pressures, the [2018 report](#) also stressed that the distinct nature of the AF community can provide a sense of security, pride and identity, and that many AF children develop effective coping strategies and display resilience. The school setting can also offer AF children some respite from the pressures of parental absence it was found. That said, the [report](#) commissioned by the Defence Secretary and launched in 2020 recommended that the MOD consider the impact of frequent moves and parental absence on AF children's schooling, as well as proposing a range of other measures aimed at addressing problems identified above (the development of a '[toolkit](#)' for schools is a partial response, along with other initiatives detailed [here](#), including for Northern Ireland). However, many of the challenges identified above were reiterated in a [survey of state-funded schools conducted between 2020-2021](#).

[Research conducted in Wales](#) and published in 2019 indicated similar issues but highlighted that learning Welsh was an additional challenge for some pupils.

A [2021 paper](#) focused specifically on SEND among AF families reported that very few studies have been conducted into this 'forgotten sub-population', although the [Forces Additional Needs and Disability Forum](#) surveyed issues faced by this community, reporting in 2020 and identifying many of the issues highlighted above. The [2021 paper](#) similarly highlighted these issues.

4.2.3 Support and issues for older children

A [2016 research report](#) published by the University of Winchester in partnership with the MOD found that proportionally fewer AF children go to university when compared to the general population. However, half the AF children included in the study expressed an intention to go to university, with the children of SNCOs demonstrating the greatest intent. Given the general lack of broader statistics, the report recommended the UK Government should monitor the educational progression of AF children, and that educational institutions (including universities) ought to better understand the needs of AF children and provide tailored support to them (among other proposals). These issues and recommendations were once again highlighted in a follow-on [2018 report](#) produced by the [Service Children's Progression Alliance](#), which also offered broader proposals, many of which reflected issues highlighted in the above section. Several of these concerns were again presented in a [study](#) commissioned by the UK Government's Defence Secretary. A [recent study](#) indicated that the [UK's Universities and Colleges Admission Service](#) was beginning to ask applicants to declare an AF connection, to begin tracking FE and HE progression among this community.

The [Scottish Government](#) is working with stakeholders to explore the barriers to FE and HE for children of AF members, including the establishment of a Service Children's Progression Alliance hub in Scotland.

4.2.4 Charity support

According to a [2017 study](#), 78 UK charities provided 'education support' to the AF community (amounting to 6.5% of all AF related charities), and 35,800 beneficiaries accessed education services in the year leading up to its publication, with 3,300 gaining qualifications. Veterans were the most common beneficiaries, but partners, children and serving personnel also received help. Support offered included vocational learning and qualifications assistance and help with achievement of HE awards, along with the provision of funding grants to individuals and, to a lesser extent,

organisations. While 70% of the charities reviewed reported assisting with training that did not lead to accredited qualifications, where recorded, 'high success rates' for qualifications were indicated. The study recommended that all related charities should report their outcomes and publish impact reports on any educational and training support provided.

5 Conclusion

This Snapshot provides details on the opportunities for serving members to capitalise on mandatory military training qualifications by accrediting them to civilian equivalents, along with funding and other support for elective training and education. While data on uptake is limited, there are indications that it is low in most cases, perhaps limited by lack of publicity and an ability to commit the time required, and/or a lack of tailored support.

In the case of ELCs, uptake appears to be higher for those in their last two years of service, which equates to the 'Resettlement' period for most. However, except in rare circumstances, such support does not extend to the partners of serving AF members, and there have been calls for greater assistance for family members transitioning alongside serving personnel.

ELCs, including the Publicly Funded Further and Higher Education scheme, can be used by veterans for up to 10 years after leaving the AF. Many FE and HE institutions offer courses targeted at the AF community, but research suggests more can be done to support and benefit from the experience and commitment this community can bring to FE and HE. Some charitable organisations also provide educational and training support (including funding) to the AF community, but research suggests better monitoring of that is required.

While more research has been focused on issues affecting children of serving AF members, much of that indicates that support should be increased for this community, and that research must continue to understand and better provide for them.

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