RAND EUROPE

# Understanding the lived experience of military-to-civilian transition and post-Service life among non-UK veterans

This study from RAND Europe explored the following question:

**'What are non-UK veterans' experiences of military-to-civilian transition and of post-Service life?'**

It aimed to address gaps in understanding of the experiences and support needs of non-UK veterans.

For the purposes of the study, non-UK veterans were defined as 'ex-Service personnel of the UK Armed Forces who did not have UK nationality at the time of entering Service'.

The study:



Reviewed existing research on non-UK personnel and veterans and mapped the historical and policy context of non-UK Service.



Gathered insights from 30 non-UK veterans from the three UK single Services and with 11 different nationalities through in-depth semi-structured interviews.



Engaged with stakeholders from the UK government and the Service charity sector to inform a series of recommendations.

The study identified various themes relating to non-UK veterans' experiences of joining the UK Armed Forces, their Service, resettlement and military-to-civilian transition and life as a non-UK veteran. The themes highlighted that:



Non-UK veterans' experiences often reflect the challenges of transitioning from military to civilian life, as well as moving between different socio-cultural environments and navigating migration processes. In this sense, non-UK veterans must frequently negotiate multiple transitions simultaneously due to the twin pressures of Service life and migration.



Experiences of Service, military-to-civilian transition and post-Service life among non-UK veterans are regularly characterised by a greater degree of complexity and uncertainty compared to those of other veterans.




Many non-UK veterans believe that their Service and support needs are poorly understood and recognised by the UK Armed Forces, the UK government and society more broadly.



Informal social networks and community organisations are important support mechanisms for non-UK veterans.

## Study recommendations

| Recommendations | Most relevant to: |
|---|---|
| **1 Advance a review of resettlement support for non-UK personnel** | |
| Consider options for further tailoring of transition support to non-UK personnel, embedding an acknowledgement of the intersections of military-to-civilian transition and migration. | UK MOD, charity/ voluntary sector |
| Ensure transition support includes advice on civilian employment pathways to help Service leavers prepare for, understand and navigate the civilian job market, particularly if they aspire to stay in the UK. | UK MOD |
| Ensure transition support acknowledges the socio-cultural aspects of military-to-civilian transition, including cultural reintegration into UK and other societies. | UK MOD |
| Ensure that non-UK personnel are encouraged to engage with resettlement support and information about transition pathways early in their military careers. | UK MOD |
| **2 Improve information-provision for non-UK Service personnel and veterans to ensure it is accessible, sensitive and consistent** | |
| Provide information pertaining to non-UK transition and post-Service pathways to personnel at the recruitment stage of their military Service. To this end, ensure that recruitment officers and others engaging with non-UK recruits are well-informed about immigration requirements and relevant aspects of policy relating to non-UK Service. | UK MOD |
| Ensure the clarity of information on the extent of resettlement support available, the elements of resettlement and transition for which Service leavers have individual responsibility, and the eligibility criteria for different support services. | UK MOD, UK OVA, charity/voluntary sector |
| Maximise the accessibility of information by testing communication materials with a diverse sample of non-UK Service personnel, veterans and their families. | UK MOD, UK OVA, charity/voluntary sector |
| Ensure the accuracy and consistency of information to non-UK Service personnel, veterans and their families across different communication channels. To this end, explore the possibility of creating single points of contact within the UK MOD and single Services who can provide information and advice to non-UK personnel and Service leavers. | UK MOD, UK OVA, charity/voluntary sector |
| Engage with other UK government departments, particularly the Home Office, to ensure that communication with non-UK Service leavers and veterans is appropriately formulated and recognises their Service. | UK MOD, UK OVA, UK Home Office |
| **3 Amplify non-UK voices within serving and veteran communities** | |
| Raise awareness among the charity and voluntary sector, stakeholders, gatekeepers (e.g., regimental welfare officers) and all those providing support to Service personnel, veterans and families about issues facing the non-UK community. | UK MOD, UK OVA, charity/voluntary sector |
| Ensure the representation and inclusion of non-UK personnel and veterans in D&I-focused initiatives (e.g., Op Teamwork) as well as public communications about the UK Armed Forces. | UK MOD, UK OVA |

| Recommendations | Most relevant to: |
|---|---|
| **4 Ensure the inclusion of small charities and voluntary organisations working with non-UK veteran communities** | |
| Conduct mapping of UK-based and overseas veteran support organisations in countries with the greatest non-UK recruitment to the UK Armed Forces. | UK OVA |
| Engage relevant small charities and voluntary organisations to co-create future initiatives to support non-UK personnel, veterans and their families. | Charity/Voluntary sector |
| **5 Ensure support provision reflects the potential psycho-social challenges faced by non-UK veterans** | |
| Recognise the potential implications of poor in-Service experiences and non-identification with the wider military and veteran community for reintegration into civilian society and quality of life among non-UK veterans. | Charity/Voluntary sector, statutory service providers (e.g., NHS) |
| Engage local community representatives to better understand the potential vulnerabilities (particularly with respect to financial services, housing, and legal services) of non-UK veterans in different local areas. | UK OVA |
| **6 Address gaps and challenges in data-collection to build an understanding of non-UK military communities** | |
| Establish clear definitions of 'non-UK veteran' in different data and policies. | UK OVA, UK MOD, charity/voluntary sector |
| Maximise the use of existing data (e.g., Career Transition Partnership data) to understand the size, demographic composition and location of the non-UK veteran population and associated transition outcomes. | UK OVA, UK MOD, charity/voluntary sector |
| **7 Continue to build evidence to support policy improvement and tailored support provision for non-UK veterans** | |
| Ensure the coordination and prioritisation of future research activities addressing non-UK Service personnel, veterans and their families. | UK MOD, UK OVA, research funding bodies |
| Pursue research to understand the resettlement and transition pathways of recent non-UK Service leavers. | Research community and funding bodies |
| Pursue research to understand the experiences of non-UK veterans located overseas and the support landscape available to them. | Research community and funding bodies |

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This report draws from independent research conducted by Linda Slapakova, Dr Ed Bryan and Dr Mattias Eken. Livia Dewaele was a researcher on the project during its first phase and thus contributed to the underpinning literature review, research scoping and data collection. The authors received feedback from two reviewers who were independent from the research team: Dr Mary Keeling and Ruth Harris.

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