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Understanding resilience as it affects the transition from the UK Armed Forces to civilian life

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Preface

This report is the third deliverable of a six-month study commissioned by the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT), which assesses the evidence relating to resilience and transition for UK Service leavers. This document presents the findings of a literature review which comprised three approaches: a systematic review of academic literature, a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) of academic and grey literature, and a scoping review of ongoing research in this domain.

In this report, the study team provides an overview of how the links between 'resilience' and 'transition' are conceptualised in the literature reviewed. It then explores existing approaches to categorising Service leavers, before identifying a range of challenges that can affect Service leavers and a number of comparator groups. Finally, a series of recommendations are outlined for research, policy and service provision.

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Foreword by the Forces in Mind Trust

Whilst most of those leaving the UK Armed Forces go on to lead successful civilian lives, there are unfortunately a minority who are negatively affected by the challenges faced during transition. To help those who struggle, we must first understand why they do, and why the majority do not. Resilience is a concept which has come up time and again in relation to successful transition and which featured strongly in the 2016 FiMT Life Transitions consultation. It is because of this regularity, and a lack of robust evidence to support it, that FiMT decided to commission RAND Europe to undertake this review.

Transition is not a straightforward process: it is an individual experience and Service leavers can face unique challenges. Resilience is a common and beneficial characteristic held by Service personnel and, for the majority, it will help them to transition, equipping them with the tools they may need to adapt to the unexpected events of civilian life. For the minority, however, it may prevent them from accepting or seeking help when needed.

Resilience is of course not unique to the UK Service leaver and in the absence of UK research, this report helpfully identifies international research where lessons can be learnt. Perhaps more interesting, however, are the similarities in challenges the report identifies of those transitioning in non-military sectors such as the skilled migrant, the university starter and even the retired opera singer.

One of the recommendations in this report calls for better data collection, an ask not uncommon in previous research, and not restricted to resilience. To be able to assess which Service leaver cohorts are most likely to need support, those working with Service leavers need to consider the ways in which they collect and categorize information, if they collect information at all. Data collection may already be at the forefront of our minds, but it is important to recognise the value of collecting granular, consistent and comprehensive information. This aggregated data can then be used to inform better service delivery and policy. This report goes one step further and helpfully provides a 'Service leaver data capture template' which offers the starting point for a collaborative data collection journey, an idea we will pursue further.

Our research, expertly conducted by RAND Europe, does not give a definitive answer as to whether resilience is linked to successful outcomes, and indeed this was not its purpose. It is, however, an extremely rich source of information which highlights the lack of sufficient UK evidence on the role of resilience in transition from military to civilian life. This report provides an informed foundation that we intend will stimulate discussion, debate and further research on the role of resilience in achieving successful outcomes for our UK Service leavers.

Isabel Summers, Evaluation Officer, Forces in Mind Trust

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Abbreviations

ASC	Academic Search Complete
CAR	Centre for Appearance Research
CHP	The Coming Home Project
CIMVHR	Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research
COBSEO	Confederation of Service Charities
DVA	Domestic Violence and Abuse
ESL	Early Service Leavers
FiMT	Forces in Mind Trust
FOCUS	Families Overcoming Stress
GP	General Practitioner
GRT	Graduated Resettlement Time
HVRT	Health Of Veterans' Research Team
IRTC	Individual Resettlement Training Costs
JSP	UK Joint Service Publication
MCTC	Military Correctional Training Centre
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NAO	National Audit Office
n.d.	No Date
NHS	National Health Service
PTS	Post-traumatic stress
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
QA	Quality Assurance
RAF	Royal Air Force
RBL	Royal British Legion

RBLI	Royal British Legion Industries
RCT	Randomized Control Trial
REA	Rapid Evidence Assessment
RQ	Research Question
SEPP	Spousal Employment Support Programme
UCLan	University of Central Lancashire
VETS	Veterans Employment Transition Support
VFI	Veterans and Families Institute
VOICE	Veteran & Occupation Impact Evaluation
WIS	Wounded, Injured and Sick
WoS	Web of Science

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

This study examines the evidence base relating to UK Service leaver resilience and transition from military to civilian life

In the years following the release of the UK Ministry of Defence's (MOD) *Armed Forces Covenant*[1] and *Strategy for Veterans*,[2] there has been growing interest among policy officials, charity representatives and academic experts in understanding the transition process for Service leavers. While recent evidence suggests that resilience is important to successful transition, no systematic review has been undertaken on the subject of UK Service leaver resilience and transition prior to this study.

To address this research gap, RAND Europe was commissioned by the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) to undertake a literature review comprised of a systematic review of academic literature, a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) of academic and grey literature, and a scoping review of ongoing research on UK Service leaver resilience and transition. This study aims to improve understanding of whether, and if so how, resilience can affect transition pathways and outcomes for UK Service leavers. In support of this objective, five research questions (RQ) are addressed in this report (see Figure S.1).

Figure S.1: Research questions

RQ1
- What is the extent of the literature on resilience and transition from military to civilian life, and what are the main findings?

RQ2
- What Service leaver 'types' can be identified, and how can these groups be categorised?

RQ3
- What are the challenges faced by (a) different Service leaver types and (b) comparator groups in other sectors and contexts?

RQ4
- How does our analysis of Service leaver challenges (RQ2-3) inform our wider understanding of resilience and transition (RQ1)?

RQ5
- What areas for future research, policy and programming can be identified?

[1] UK MOD (2000).

[2] UK MOD (2006).

These research questions are addressed through three complementary literature reviews focused on resilience and transition (*RQ1*), Service leaver types and challenges (*RQ2 and RQ3a*), and comparator group challenges (*RQ3b*). Although these literature reviews have different areas of focus, they draw on a common four-step approach comprised of (i) search strategy development; (ii) study searches and selection; (iii) data extraction; and (iv) synthesis of findings through a workshop and narrative write-up.

Several common themes can be identified in the literature with regard to 'resilience' and 'transition'

While 'resilience' is often *not* assigned a specific definition in the literature reviewed, a number of common elements of resilience can be identified: hardiness, a positive attitude, coping skills, and the ability to handle challenges. The literature often conceptualises resilience at the individual level, representing personal skills or traits that can be built upon. Nonetheless, there also appears to be an important link between the individual and their wider environment: the resilience of the individual cannot be isolated from the resilience of their family, peers and wider community. Both the academic and grey literature see resilience not only as a characteristic that varies with context, time, age, gender and life circumstances, but also as a continuous process and as an outcome of transition.

In a similar way to 'resilience', the literature highlights several common conceptualisations of 'transition'. In particular, most sources portray transition as a process of *adaptation* from one identity or culture to another, and indicate that there are multiple components of transition including, for example, employment, mental health and housing. While some papers apply time-based parameters to this adaptation process, others reject this approach in favour of a more 'staged' approach focused on the different phases of the transition journey for Service leavers (e.g. the period of preparation for departure, resettlement and re-entry to civilian employment).

'Successful' transitions have been described in relation to a number of indicators. These include the ability to find satisfying work, maintain stable mental health, find suitable housing, and sustain successful family relationships. According to the literature reviewed, in a number of cases successful transition outcomes can also be linked to external policy and service provision. However, there is a need for clearer criteria of transition 'success', 'ease' and 'difficulty' in order to (i) improve consistency and comparability between different academic studies; and (ii) be better able to evaluate transition policies and programmes.

The role of resilience in shaping transition experiences and outcomes is not widely discussed and findings are mixed in the papers reviewed

There appear to be very few studies explicitly discussing the role of resilience in the transition from military to civilian life in the UK (seven studies). When the role of resilience *is* discussed, studies tend to identify a positive link between resilience and successful transition: resilience can better equip individuals to adapt to change, handle uncertainty, and cope with issues associated with transition. However, several sources instead identify a more negative relationship and find that the 'can-do' attitude institutionalised through military Service may, in some cases, act as a barrier to seeking support in civilian life. In relation to the first research question, then, there is a limited evidence base in this area and the literature reviewed

presents mixed findings in relation to whether resilience positively or negatively affects transition outcomes for Service leavers. Furthermore, given that 'resilience' encompasses a wide range of personal character traits, it becomes more challenging systematically to analyse factors that support transition.

UK Service leavers are categorised by the academic and policy communities in several ways, but existing approaches lack granularity

In relation to the second research question, Service leavers undergoing transition tend to be classified by 'type' in three different ways in the literature reviewed. The first (and most common) approach categorises Service leavers by **discharge type**, which relates to the circumstances of their discharge. According to the UK Joint Service Publication (JSP) 534 (Issue 17, September 2017), for example, the following categorisations are used across all three Services to determine the level of resettlement to which different Service leavers are entitled: Early Service Leavers (ESLs), 'normal discharge' Service leavers, and 'medically discharged' Service leavers. Second, the literature groups Service leavers according to their **physical and mental characteristics**, which relate to the physical health, mental health and/or behavioural state of an individual upon departure (e.g. substance abuse, pregnancy). A final approach to categorising Service leavers in the literature reviewed relates to **Service leaver identity**, which refers to a Service leaver's sense of self, military belonging and personal identity.

However, it is clear that these categorisation approaches often lack granularity in their discussion of Service leavers' demographic backgrounds, the circumstances under which they leave, their level of resilience, and their vulnerability at (and beyond) the point of departure. This means that there is a shortage of existing research on how these factors can affect the 'success' of transition experiences, and that there is a consequent need for capturing additional variables and characteristics when conducting research on Service leavers' experiences of transition.

We present an indicative 'Service leavers data capture template' that offers a foundation for more targeted research

In light of these data gaps, we present an indicative template that is designed to enable the more detailed examination of transition experience among different Service leaver populations through the generation of more comparable and generalisable data (see Figure S.2 below). The template could be used by the MOD, the wider community of service providers and the research community in order to capture data at source. With the data obtained using this template, researchers would be better equipped to conduct primary research in order to identify areas of 'low resilience' and vulnerability among specific 'types' of Service leavers. This would, in turn, equip policy leads and military charity representatives with the data to develop more targeted support tailored to the transition challenges that specific types of Service leavers face.

As the 'leaver type' column indicates, this template draws on the MOD's categorisation of Service leavers: Early Service Leavers, 'normal discharge' Service leavers, and 'medical discharge' Service leavers, given that this is the most commonly used classification approach in the literature reviewed. When using this type of template, we suggest that researchers not only capture Service leavers' discharge type and circumstances of

leave (as presented in the red columns below), but also consider a wider set of contextual factors that may affect individual transition experiences, such as age, gender, deployment experience or socio-economic background. This may help template users produce more rigorous research, and gather the data required to better understand areas of challenge for specific cohorts of Service leaver, with a view to improving evidence-based policy and support provision in this area.

Figure S.2: Service leavers data capture template

Leaver type	Circumstances of leave	Service	Gender	Age	Years of service	Commissioned/ non-commissioned	Combat deployment experience	Marital status	Sexual orientation	Children or dependants	Ethnic origin	Highest educational qualification	Comments *(e.g. relevant trade skills)*
Early Service Leaver	Disciplinary discharge	Army	Female	<18	<4.5	Commissioned	No	Divorced	Heterosexual or straight	No	Asian British	None	*[free text]*
Normal discharge	Completion of engagement	RAF	Male	18-24	4.5-8	Non-commissioned	Yes	Married, including civil partnerships	Homosexual	Yes	Black/ Caribbean British	GCSE (or equivalent)	
Medical discharge	Elective discharge	Royal Marines	Other	25-29	9-15			Partnership	Other		Foreign and Commonwealth	A-Level (or equivalent)	
	Family reasons	Royal Navy		30-39	>15			Separated			Mixed	Bachelor's degree (or equivalent)	
	Redundancy			40-49				Single			White	Master's degree (or equivalent)	
	Submission of notice to leave			50-59				Widowed			Other	Doctor of Philosophy (or equivalent)	
	Other			>59								Vocational training	
												Other	

While many Service leavers undergo successful transitions, others can face challenges relating to ill health, unemployment and homelessness

Many Service leavers integrate into civilian life without being adversely affected by the challenges of transition. However, some Service leavers either face more significant challenges or are less able to overcome challenges. The third research question explored transition challenges, which can include difficulties in adapting to a new civilian identity and building new relationships outside the Armed Forces. Other challenges relate to the more practical aspects of transition, such as finding new accommodation, dealing with financial independence, and navigating (re-)entry to civilian employment. Health issues can also create challenges, whether in relation to physical health, mental health (e.g. post-traumatic stress disorder – PTSD) or substance abuse. The literature reviewed indicates that many of these challenges are interlinked, with several studies identifying a strong causal relationship between the physical and mental health of Service leavers.

According to several papers, demographic factors such as age (youth) or a disadvantaged socio-economic background can intensify transition challenges for Service leavers. Moreover, the literature reviewed indicates that certain Service leaver 'types' are more vulnerable to transition challenges than others. These include:

(i) Some **ESLs**, reportedly vulnerable to mental health issues, employment difficulties, homelessness, and substance abuse; and lacking access to the full suite of UK resettlement support.

(ii)   Some individuals who have been **involuntary discharged**, exposed to feelings of rejection, to homelessness and to mental health issues.

(iii)   Some **Service leavers with deployment and/or combat experience**, given that this experience can expose individuals to traumatic events and can in some cases be linked to increased rates of violent offending, physical and mental issues, homelessness and premature mortality.

While these high-level trends are presented in the literature reviewed, it is nonetheless important to recognise the diversity of Service leavers, which reflects the variety of roles performed in the Armed Forces, the different circumstances affecting Service leavers upon departure, and the range of reasons for leaving the military. As such, not all Service leavers within these categorises will face the same challenges or experience transition in the same way.

Challenges affecting civilian comparator groups are often similar to those faced by Service leavers and offer applicable lessons

As part of the third research question, the literature review also identified challenges affecting comparator groups in the civilian sector, i.e. bereaved individuals, divorcees, skilled migrants, former prisoners, individuals experiencing involuntary job loss, individuals leaving a strong professional culture, foster care leavers, and university starters. These challenges relate to:

- **Mental and emotional challenges**, e.g. emotional issues, depression, PTSD.
- **Physical health**, e.g. blood pressure, risk of morbidity, substance abuse.
- **Relationships with others**, e.g. challenges in maintaining existing relationships in the context of transition, challenges in forming new relationships with others.
- **Relocation**, i.e. challenges associated with a physical change in location.
- **Rehousing**, i.e. challenges in finding stable accommodation.
- **Identity change**, i.e. challenges relating to self-perception and self-definition.
- **Independent living**, e.g. managing personal finances, registering for healthcare services.
- **Challenges of employment**, i.e. challenges in finding and maintaining employment.

According to the literature reviewed, individuals in each comparator group experience a combination of the challenges listed above during the transition process. Most of the challenges listed are relevant to most of the comparator groups, albeit in varying ways and to different degrees. Challenges associated with mental health, for example, are common across all comparator groups but feature particularly strongly in the literature on divorce and bereavement, and less so in the literature on the experiences of young people starting university. In a similar way to the experience of a number of Service leavers, a number of challenges may be present for individuals in the comparator groups during transition.

Similarly to the challenges affecting some Service leavers, comparator group challenges can reinforce each other to create a particularly difficult transition experience. In the case of prison release, for example, challenges associated with mental health and substance abuse are connected closely to challenges of relocation and employment, with individuals who experience mental health difficulties or substance abuse

often finding it more difficult to find a stable job and appropriate housing. Challenges of transition should therefore not be considered in isolation, as this would overlook the interplay between these different issue areas.

Despite limited discussion on how resilience affects transition for Service leavers, the 'comparator group' literature provides valuable insights

As described in earlier sections, there is limited discussion of the relationship between resilience and transition outcomes in the literature on Service leavers. Papers reviewed instead tend to focus on a number of factors related to resilience that can assist the success of a transition. Among the most frequently mentioned factors contributing to successful transitions are support groups and peer networks that address challenges associated with Service leavers' feelings of isolation. Other studies also identify fulfilling employment, effective communication, good mental health and positive approaches to handling challenges as drivers of successful transition.

In summary, this report finds that there is not sufficient UK evidence either to substantiate or challenge the claim that resilience plays an important role in supporting transition from military to civilian life. What can be said is that there is an (albeit limited) body of evidence linking employment, communication, personal relationships, financial issues, mental health and other factors to transition pathways and outcomes. In relation to the comparator group analysis, however, resilience is found to play a role in equipping individuals to handle transition challenges more effectively. This body of literature across comparator groups may therefore offer a rich source of evidence, building on a more limited existing understanding of resilience in the Service leaver context.

This report presents recommendations for research, policy and support provision

Building on the findings presented above, Table S.1 outlines a set of recommendations for: (i) research funders and researchers; and (ii) policymakers and relevant bodies engaged in support provision for UK Service leavers.

Table S.1: Overview of recommendations for research, policy and service provision

Recommendation (R)	Supporting evidence
Recommendations for research funders and researchers	
R1: Primary research should be undertaken to improve understanding of the relationship between Service leaver resilience and transition experiences.	A core finding of the study is that the role of resilience in shaping transition is *not* widely discussed in the secondary literature; primary research is therefore needed to enhance understanding of this area.
R2: Qualitative primary research should be undertaken to enhance understanding of 'what works', for whom and why in transition to civilian life.	Expert Workshop discussions highlighted that research on Service leavers has tended to focus on challenges faced, rather than positive transition experiences – a finding that reflects the content of literature reviewed.
R3: 'Deeper dive' research into the support provided for one or more comparator groups could offer lessons for the Service leaver context.	While the literature on resilience and transition is relatively sparse in the military context, the comparator group literature may offer a richer base of evidence.
R4: More funding for longitudinal research should be allocated to support an enhanced understanding of transition experiences over time.	Our literature review identified a shortage of longitudinal research in relation to Service leaver resilience; reviewed studies noted the benefits of this type of research to tracking longer-term transition experiences.
Recommendations for policymakers and support providers	
R5: Data collection on Service leaver resilience and transition should be systematised, and information sharing practices improved.	There is no commonly used existing typology of UK Service leavers. The need for more granular data capture is clear both from the data gaps in the literature reviewed and from Expert Workshop discussions.
R6: Policymakers and service providers should continue to develop support mechanisms designed to prepare personnel for transition *before* as well as *at* and *after* the point of departure.	While the literature notes an important connection between individual preparedness for transition and transition 'success', Expert Workshop participants stated that there could be more pre-discharge support offered to build resilience in order to prepare personnel for departure.
R7: Integrated support should be offered to UK Service leavers in recognition of the links between challenges associated with transition.	Our analysis of challenges faced by Service leavers and comparator groups found that these challenges are often interlinked and that there is merit in signposting support offered across 'challenge areas'.

1. Introduction

This report presents the results of a RAND Europe study aimed at building an understanding of 'resilience'[3] and 'transition' from military to civilian life,[4] and at enhancing awareness of how resilience can affect transition experiences and outcomes for UK Service leavers. The study was commissioned by the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) in November 2017.

1.1. Background

Since the publication of the UK Ministry of Defence's (MOD) *Strategy for Veterans*[5] and *Armed Forces Covenant*,[6] there has been increased interest among policy officials, military charities and the academic community in understanding the transition process for Service leavers. The MOD recognises that it has a duty of care for individuals who have committed themselves to serving the country. As outlined in MOD (2017): '*for many, the transition from military service into civilian life represents one of the most significant changes an individual and their family will ever experience. It is right that, as a Department, we provide as comprehensive a resettlement offer as possible…to support our remarkable veterans and their loved ones.*'[7]

Recent evidence suggests that transition outcomes can be improved by Service leaver 'resilience', which is seen as being both innate to the individual and a product of previous life experiences.[8] According to some definitions, resilience is at the core of successful transition: for example, the FiMT *Transition Mapping Study* describes a good transition as '*one that enables ex-Service personnel to be sufficiently resilient to adapt successfully to civilian life, both now and in the future*'.[9] While resilience is often understood in the narrow context of military or combatant resilience,[10] this report draws on FiMT's broader conceptualisation of

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[3] While this report outlines a range of definitions of resilience (see Section 2.2.1), we offer the following working definition: 'the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress — such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace and financial stressors' (American Psychological Association 2017 in RAND Europe proposal, August 2017).

[4] Transition refers to any event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions and roles, and in this study refers to the move from military to civilian life (Schlossberg et al. 1995 in RAND Europe proposal, August 2017). See Section 2.2.2 for further discussion of how the wider literature conceptualises the term.

[5] UK MOD (2006).

[6] UK MOD (2000).

[7] UK MOD (2017).

[8] FiMT (2016).

[9] FiMT (2013, 5).

[10] McGarry et al. (2015).

resilience, which includes financial, psychological and emotional resilience, and encompasses the Service leaver and their immediate family.[11]

It is important to recognise the diversity of Service leavers, which reflects the variety of roles performed in the Armed Forces, the different circumstances affecting Service leavers upon departure, and the range of reasons for leaving the military. As noted in the FiMT *Transition Mapping Study*, '*only a tiny proportion of those who join the Services are able to formally retire at the end of their Service career*'.[12] Some, for example, move on to pursue a career in the civilian world,[13] while others face involuntary termination[14] or leave for a range of other reasons.

There remains a research gap in defining what constitutes a 'successful' transition,[15] and no systematic review had been undertaken to date on the subject of UK Service leaver resilience and transition prior to this study. The relationship between resilience and transition has not been extensively or explicitly discussed in the UK military context beyond the ability of Armed Forces personnel and their families to cope with the demands of military service.[16] To address these research gaps, RAND Europe was commissioned by FiMT to undertake a literature review comprising three approaches: a systematic review of academic literature, a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) of academic and grey literature,[17] and a scoping review of ongoing research on UK Service leaver resilience and transition in order to improve understanding of the evidence base in this domain.

1.2. Purpose and scope

The overarching objective of this study is to enhance understanding of whether – and how – resilience can affect transition pathways and outcomes for UK Service leavers. This study addresses five research questions (RQ) in support of this aim:

- **RQ1**: What is the extent of the literature on resilience and transition from military to civilian life, and what are the main findings?
- **RQ2**: What Service leaver 'types' can be identified, and how can these groups be categorised?
- **RQ3**: What are the challenges faced by (a) different Service leaver types and (b) comparator groups in other sectors and contexts?
- **RQ4**: How does our analysis of Service leaver challenges (RQ2-3) inform our wider understanding of resilience and transition (RQ1)?
- **RQ5**: What areas for future research, policy and service provision can be identified?

It should be noted that this study focuses on Service leavers in the context of transition from military to civilian life. While there is a large body of literature on 'transition' in relation to deployment and serving

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[11] FiMT (2013, 5).

[12] FiMT (2013, 12).

[13] See, for example, Elliott et al. (2017).

[14] See, for example, Van Staden et al. (2007).

[15] FiMT (2013).

[16] Hoge (2010); Wolpert (2000).

[17] Section 1.3 provides further details regarding the research approach and methods applied.

personnel, this is beyond the scope of the study and is excluded from the review. As Annex A discusses in more detail, while this study aims at improving understanding of the links between resilience and transition pathways and outcomes for UK Service leavers, literature on other countries[18] was also included in the study in order to offer transferable lessons from other contexts, and to mitigate the limited availability of relevant UK source material on resilience and transition.

The 'comparator groups' in RQ3 (b) refer to those who experience transitions that are in some ways similar to the transitions experienced by Service leavers when departing from the Armed Forces. In determining these comparator groups, the study team first identified some of the particular characteristics of military service that may translate into particular civilian domains, together with some of the particular characteristics of the military-to-civilian transition – both of which are described in more detail in Section 5.1. The selection of the eight comparator groups below was finalised through study team discussion at internal meetings:

- **Bereaved individuals,** in particular those mourning the death of a close family member or friend.
- **Divorcees** and other individuals who experience the breakdown of a long-term relationship.
- **Skilled migrants** who leave a skilled profession in their home country, and move to a new country of residence.
- **Former prisoners** who return to wider society after a period of incarceration.
- **Individuals who experience involuntary job loss**, both through redundancy and dismissal.
- **Individuals who leave a career with a strong professional culture**, including both planned and unexpected (e.g. through injury) departures.
- **Foster care leavers** who leave the social care system and transition to independent living as an adult.
- **University starters**, which focuses primarily on young people moving to university after finishing secondary education.

1.3. Methodology

1.3.1. Overview of research approach

As summarised in Table 1.1 and described in more detail in Annex A, this study is primarily based on three literature reviews designed to address the research questions presented above. An Expert Workshop was also held at the Forces in Mind Trust offices in London on 28 March 2018 to validate emerging findings from the literature review.[19]

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[18] As Table 1.1 in Section 1.3 explains, no exclusion criteria were applied to 'country'. Given their relevance to the study objective, the sources included in the final review covered the UK, United States, Canada and Australia,

[19] This workshop was attended by 14 participants in addition to the 4 RAND Europe and 3 FiMT organisers, with 8 representatives of military charities, 4 academic experts, and 2 MOD officials in attendance. Workshop findings were synthesised and compared with emerging literature review findings during an internal team meeting held on 10 April 2018. The workshop agenda can be found in Annex C.

Table 1.1 Overview of literature reviews

Review theme	Aim of review	Type of literature review[20]	Number of papers reviewed
1. Resilience and transition	To address RQ1 by identifying existing definitions of 'resilience' and 'transition', exploring reported links between the two concepts, and by highlighting research gaps. *This informs the analysis presented in Chapters 2 and 6.*	• Systematic review of academic literature • Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) of 'grey'[21] literature • Scoping review of ongoing research.	• Systematic review: 16 papers (*from initial longlist of 7,118 records – see Annex A.1 for an overview of how these were identified*) • REA: 12 papers (*from longlist of 59 records*) • Scoping review: 19 papers (*no longlist – see Annex A.1*).
2. Service leaver types and challenges	To address RQ2 by: (i) examining if and how the existing literature categorises different 'types' of Service leavers; and (ii) developing an indicative 'Service leavers data capture template' as a foundational tool for better understanding areas of 'low resilience' and vulnerability in order to support targeted service provision. To address RQ3(a) by identifying	• REA of academic and grey literature.[22]	• 29 papers (*from longlist of 57 records – see Annex A.2*).

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[20] While the systematic review was designed to be comprehensive and to provide a broad overview of all existing research on resilience and transition within the parameters of the search strategy, the REAs and scoping review instead focus on a selection of studies but do not claim to be comprehensive. For further explanation of the differences between these types of literature review, please see: The National Archives (2014).

[21] 'Grey literature' is defined as literature that is not published in peer-reviewed academic journals, and includes policy papers, research reports, government white papers, doctoral theses, workshop transcripts, evaluation reports, and other forms of substantive work. Although grey literature is generally considered to be less reliable than peer-reviewed academic journal articles, it nonetheless often includes informative and rigorous publications that complement and build on the available academic literature. See: Cornell University Library (2017).

[22] An REA was considered more appropriate than a systematic review for the second and third reviews, given that these reviews did not seek to examine *all* sources of relevant literature on Service leaver types and comparator groups. Further systematic reviews were beyond the agreed scope, timeframe and resource constraints of the study.

	challenges that can affect Service leavers undergoing transition and by exploring the role of resilience and wider support in helping Service leavers address these. *This informs Chapters 3, 4 and 6.*		
3. Comparator group challenges	To address RQ3(b) by analysing challenges affecting a number of groups undergoing a comparable transition experience, and drawing implications for the Service leaver context. *This informs Chapters 5 and 6.*	• REA of academic and grey literature.	• 23 papers (*from longlist of 1,946 – see Annex A.3*).

Although the literature reviews described in Table 1.1 were conducted separately and had different areas of focus, the study team drew on a similar approach for each review which was structured around the four principal steps outlined in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Overview of research process for literature reviews
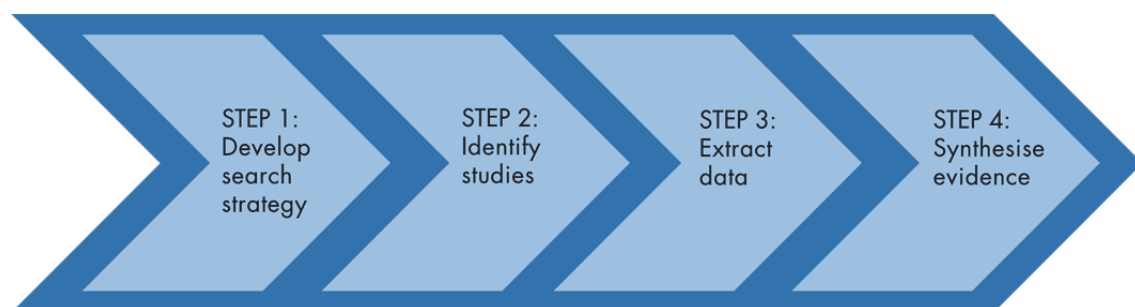
For each review, a search strategy was first developed, defining search terms and parameters for the reviews ('step 1'). This required the development of a search strategy in order to set out the parameters of the review in advance, including details regarding selected databases, search terms, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied. This step was followed by study searches and selection ('step 2'), which entailed identifying sources shortlisted by scanning titles and abstracts for relevance, and by conducting a quality assessment devised by the RAND study team (see Table A.2 in Annex A). 'Step 3' involved extracting data from the shortlisted papers and categorising these in an Excel spreadsheet. Finally, for each review, one researcher wrote up findings in a narrative synthesis aligned with themes of interest to FiMT ('step 4'), following discussion of emerging findings at an analysis workshop with the study team. Annex A provides a more detailed description of how these steps were applied in relation to each of the three reviews (Sections A.1-A.3), as well an overview of the main strengths and limitations of the methodological approach (Section A.4).

1.3.2. Strengths and limitations

Several strengths and limitations of the methodological approach applied in this study should be noted in considering the findings presented. These are set out below and – unless otherwise specified – refer to all three reviews.

Strengths

- The targeted systematic review searches mean that it is unlikely that relevant published research would have been missed when conducting the resilience and transition review.
- The decision to supplement database searches of published academic research with targeted grey literature searches helped ensure that policy, programming and other non-academic perspectives could also be captured in the analysis.
- For each of the three reviews, the use of a structured database search provided an indication of the volume of literature available, also facilitating the selection of high-quality literature by providing an extensive longlist of sources from which to choose a final shortlist.
- In the systematic review of resilience and transition literature, the involvement of a second researcher in assessing borderline cases meant that any areas of doubt regarding exclude/include decisions were discussed and resolved.
- Looking more broadly at the use of comparator groups to research the transitions of Service leavers, this approach benefits from the significant amount of literature that exists in a number of topic areas, some of which have received a much higher level of research interest than the military-to-civilian transition.
- An analysis of different comparator groups may also provide novel insights and approaches that have thus far been overlooked in the existing military literature, and the inclusion of multiple comparator groups in this study helps add confidence to the common themes and conclusions that are identified through the study.

Limitations

- While the systematic review was designed to capture all relevant English-language literature on resilience and transition in Service leavers, there is always a possibility that some sources will be missed due to the inherent limitations of databases and the search strings used to delimit the scope of searches;
- Due to the large numbers of studies identified during the search stage, there is a limited risk of human error when selecting the studies for full-text review. However, the involvement of a second researcher in reviewing the shortlisted resilience and transition review articles and discussing borderline cases mitigates this risk to some extent;
- In the systematic review of resilience and transition literature, papers focused on specific challenges (e.g. mental health or post-traumatic stress disorder – PTSD) were excluded unless the abstract made explicit links to 'resilience' or 'transition'. It is possible that some of these sources may make indirect links to resilience and transition, but were excluded from the final shortlist of sources;

- In contrast to the articles identified in the systematic review and REA of resilience and transition literature, articles that discuss examples of ongoing research are typically short in length, do not contain detailed descriptions of research approaches, and lack clear definitions of terminology used. As a result, the analysis of ongoing research presented in the report is less detailed than that for the systematic review and REA of resilience and transition literature, but nonetheless provides an overview of selected research currently being undertaken;

- In relation to the comparator group's review, a lighter-touch quality assessment approach (detailed in Section A.3) was applied in order to reduce the number of sources to a manageable quantity for the data extraction stage. While this approach attempted to select a range of sources that would provide both a broad and in-depth overview of each comparator group, the final selection was largely based on the reviewer's assessment of the relevance of the source to the review aims and scope; and

- For the comparator groups review, it should be recognised that the number of sources considered for each comparator group is small, ranging from two to four pieces of literature (See Annex B.3).

- The Expert Workshop findings represent the views of workshop participants and, as such, they may not represent the official position of the UK government, military charities or academic organisations represented. It should be noted that workshop participants are likely to have a particular perspective depending on their role, institutional position and personal affiliation. As such, where possible the research team has made efforts to compare workshop findings with the literature reviewed.

1.4. Report structure

This report outlines the findings of the study and provides a set of recommendations. In addition to this introduction, the report contains five substantive chapters:

- **Chapter 2: Conceptualising resilience and transition**, which outlines definitions of 'resilience' and 'transition', evidence of links between resilience and transition, and research gaps in this area. *This chapter corresponds to the first research question outlined in Section 1.2 – RQ1*;

- **Chapter 3: Types of Service leavers**, which examines how different groups of Service leavers have been categorised in the literature reviewed, before presenting an indicative 'Service leavers data capture template' (*RQ2*);

- **Chapter 4: Transition challenges for Service leavers**, which explores challenges that can affect a number of Service leavers, and analyses the role of resilience and wider support (*RQ3a*);

- **Chapter 5: Lessons from comparator groups**, which identifies comparable challenges faced by bereaved individuals, divorcees, skilled migrants, former prisoners, individuals experiencing involuntary job loss, individuals leaving a strong professional culture, foster care leavers and university starters (*RQ3b*);

- **Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations**, which presents the key study findings and a set of associated recommendations for research, policy and service provision (*All RQ*).

2. Conceptualising resilience and transition

This chapter presents findings in relation to RQ1: '*What is the extent of the literature on resilience and transition from military to civilian life, and what are the main findings?*' To address this question, the following sections first outline existing definitions of 'resilience' and 'transition' (Section 2.1), before exploring reported links between the two concepts (Section 2.2). Finally, the chapter highlights research gaps in this area (Section 2.3).

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the 'resilience and transition review', which comprises:

- A systematic review of published academic literature, initially identifying 7,118 records and resulting in a full-text review of 16 relevant papers;
- An REA of published grey literature, initially identifying 59 sources of potential relevance and with 12 papers included in the final REA; and
- A scoping review of unpublished grey literature, focusing on 19 examples of ongoing research.[23]

2.1. Definitions of resilience and transition

2.1.1. Resilience

Resilience is a concept that features across a wide range of thematic areas. It is not only a focus of literature on Service leavers (see the sections below) but is also central to literature on – for example – children affected by armed conflict,[24] caregivers coping with HIV/AIDS,[25] communities affected by natural disasters,[26] migrant populations affected by climate change,[27] and school teachers aiming to build social cognitive resilience to violent extremism among students.[28] However, given that this study seeks to examine the evidence base in relation to resilience and transition in UK Service leavers, the following sections focus on resilience in the military context.

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[23] Please refer to Section B.1 of Annex B for a more detailed overview of the literature included in this review, and to Section A.1 of Annex A for explanation of how this review was conducted.

[24] See, for example, Betancourt & Khan (2008).

[25] See, for example, Evans (2005).

[26] See, for example, Chandra et al. (2011); Shih et al. (2018).

[27] See, for example, Black et al. (2011).

[28] See, for example, Aly (2014).

Review of academic literature

While there is no universally agreed definition of resilience in the academic literature, the term has a particular connotation of hardiness and strength in the military context.[29] Of the 16 sources reviewed, only four offer an explicit definition of resilience.[30] The literature highlights a number of common elements of resilience, including coping and adaptive skills, a positive attitude, and the ability to handle stress.[31] A total of five sources view resilience as an individual quality that is either inherent or as a skill that can be learned or improved upon.[32] Resilience is often understood in terms of personal coping skills,[33] and can be seen as a 'can-do attitude championed and respected by the military'.[34]

Resilience is, therefore, more often conceptualised at the individual level than at the group or organisational level in the academic literature. For Hourani et al. (2012), resilience embodies the personal qualities that enable individuals to thrive in the face of adversity, including self-esteem, optimism and perceived control. In this paper, resilience is also presented as a multidimensional characteristic that varies with context, time, age, gender, and cultural origin, and according to an individual subject's life circumstances. According to Hourani et al. (2012), resilience can be seen as a predictor of an individual's ability to conduct day-to-day activities regardless of wider emotional or psychological influences.[35]

McGarry et al. (2015) expand the concept of military resilience beyond the individual level. Their study conceptualises resilience in three ways: not only in relation to individual traits (e.g. optimism, hardiness, self-esteem), but also in relation to interpersonal relationships (e.g. social support, personal support networks), and as a skill to be learned over time (e.g. through military training programmes).[36] Their study develops typologies of resilience, focusing on both the individual ('inherent resilience') and institutional levels ('structural resilience').

This classification of resilience is particularly relevant in the military context: at the institutional level, military culture ('structural resilience') is seen to help strengthen personal resilience among Service personnel and leavers ('inherent resilience').[37] In other words, for the military system to operate successfully, Armed Forces personnel are expected to perform under extreme circumstances.[38] This conceptualisation of resilience was developed based on the MOD Army Doctrine which defined resilience as 'the degree to which people and their equipment remain effective under arduous conditions or in the face of hostile action'.[39]

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[29] McGarry, Walklate et al. (2015).

[30] Bobrow, Cook et al. (2013); Bowen & Martin (2011); Hourani, Bender et al. (2012); McGarry, Walklate et al. (2015).

[31] See for example: Berle & Steel (2015); Bowen & Martin (2011); McGarry, Walklate et al. (2015).

[32] Albertson, Irving et al. (2015); Binks & Cambridge (2017); Bobrow, Cook et al. (2013); Bowen & Martin (2011); Hourani, Bender et al. (2012).

[33] Albertson, Irving et al. (2015); Bobrow, Cook et al. (2013).

[34] Binks & Cambridge (2017).

[35] Hourani, Bender et al. (2012).

[36] McGarry, Walklate et al. (2015).

[37] McGarry, Walklate et al. (2015).

[38] McGarry, Walklate et al. (2015).

[39] UK MOD (2017).

While some sources view resilience in relation to personal or institutional characteristics, others see it as a process. For example, Bowen and Martin (2011) conceptualise resilience as a process that reflects an individual's ability to continue to function while making life changes, facing adversities, addressing positive challenges (such as promotion to a new rank or taking on greater responsibility), and recovering from difficult life events and conditions.[40] While Bowen and Martin (2011) view resilience as a process, they describe 'resiliency' as the outcome of resilience, ranging on a continuum from low to high.

Review of grey literature

As with the systematic review of academic literature, the grey literature analysed does not conceptualise 'resilience' in a uniform way. Of the 12 grey literature sources reviewed, only five offer a definition of resilience.[41] As doctoral theses with an explicit focus on resilience, both Rotter (2015) and Lowe (2015) review and define the concept of resilience. Lowe (2015), for example, offers a broad definition of resilience as '*the qualities that an individual possesses allowing one to flourish in a time of adversity, and… a measure of coping ability*',[42] before proceeding to deconstruct the concept into three distinct areas – individual factors, family factors and community factors – that are in turn broken down into a large number of constituent elements outlined in Table 2.1 below.[43]

Table 2.1 Breakdown of resilience into individual, family and community factors

Category of 'resilience factors'	Examples of 'resilience factors'
Individual factors	• Ability to manage taxing circumstances; • Ability and willingness to solve personal and interpersonal problems; • Ability to reduce or tolerate conflict; • Approach towards coping (active/pragmatic, problem-focused, spiritual); • Degree of enthusiasm; • Attitude towards change, including degree of optimism, humour, hope, and flexibility; • Level of self-esteem and self-worth; • Level of confidence; degree of self-efficacy and self-control; • Acceptance of what is beyond control or cannot be changed; and • Physical ability of the body to function efficiently and effectively.
Family factors	• Degree of bonding among family members, including shared recreation and leisure time; • Quality of interaction with family, including exchange of thoughts, opinions, or information;

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[40] Bowen & Martin (2011).

[41] Davies (2014); Kantar Futures (2017); Rotter (2015); Ursano et al. (2014).

[42] Lowe (2015, 46).

[43] Lowe (2015, 46–9).

	• Family approach to problem-solving and relationship management;
	• Degree of emotional, tangible, instrumental, informational, and spiritual support;
	• Parenting skills;
	• Adaptability of the family to changes associated with military life, including flexible roles within the family.
Community factors	• Degree and quality of interaction within the unit or community;
	• Degree of pride and support provided by community;
	• Presence of positive role models within the community;
	• Integration within the community and formation of friendships;
	• Participation in spiritual/faith-based organisations, social services and schools;
	• Implementation of institutional policies that bring people together within the community.

Source: Adapted from Lowe (2015)

Rotter (2015) also discusses at length the definition of resilience, conceptualising it in a way that contrasts with Lowe's more granular breakdown of the term.[44] In contrast to Lowe's focus on adversity and coping, Rotter's definition of resilience places greater emphasis on adapting to different environments and transitioning successfully, focusing on '*the ability to successfully transform one's position and adopt Soldier Mode when in combat and military contexts, while then adopting Civilian Mode when in civilian contexts*'.[45] Rotter (2015) brings together several interpretations of resilience into a 'holistic' and 'narrative' construct of resilience[46] that describes '*resilience as a characteristic*', '*resilience as a process*', and '*resilience as an outcome*'.[47]

Ursano et al. (2014) offer a number of descriptions and uses of the term 'resilience'. One particularly detailed discussion of resilience defines the term as a so-called '*system dynamic*', where 'systems' refers to: (i) the individual brain neurons of personnel, (ii) the personnel themselves, (iii) the family of Armed Forces personnel, (iv) their immediate community, and (v) wider society.[48] Ursano et al. note that the resilience within these different systems is intimately interconnected, meaning that the capacity of any one system to '*withstand, adapt or recover from significant disturbances*' is not only derived from the system itself, but also from its relationship with and the resilience of other related systems.[49] For military personnel transitioning out of service, for example, this systems approach finds that the resilience of the individual cannot be detached from the resilience of the individual's family, friendship group, local community, physical environment and wider society.

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[44] Rotter (2015, 37).

[45] Rotter (2015, 77).

[46] Rotter (2015, 56–7).

[47] Rotter (2015, 175–84).

[48] Ursano, Gabbay et al. (2014, 49).

[49] Ursano, Gabbay et al. (2014, 49–51).

Ursano et al. (2014) also break down resilience into three distinct areas: 'risk focused' resilience, 'asset focused' resilience, and 'process focused' resilience. When attempting to assist an individual transition, it is argued that any one of these three areas can be supported: the risk experienced by a family can be lowered, access to assets (such as economic resources) can be increased, and interventions can be tailored to focus on strengthening human adaptive systems and their ability to cope with transition.[50] Ursano et al. (2014) echo Lowe (2015) in their view of resilience as a dynamic phenomenon, as opposed to being a static 'characteristic' that does not change with time.[51]

Davies (2014) does not provide a single definition of resilience, but instead describes resilience in a number of contexts. In particular, the author differentiates between 'career resilience' and 'career adaptability', with 'career resilience' defined as a factor that enables individuals to overcome difficult professional changes, and 'career adaptability' defined as the set of skills that enables individuals to identify and improve their occupational skills.[52] Davies also focuses on 'military resilience', which he defines as the attributes required to endure the hardships of military life, such as subduing emotions and establishing personal coping mechanisms in order to 'soldier on'.[53] Kantar Futures (2017) categorises resilience in a different way, focusing on a broader conceptualisation of '*financial, psychological and emotional resilience*'.[54]

The remaining seven grey literature sources identified in the REA do not define resilience explicitly, but instead identify and discuss factors that can influence the success of a military-to-civilian transition. These factors vary in nature and include personal characteristics and experiences, an individual's environment both before and after leaving the military, and the wider social context. Some of these factors are identified through statistical analyses that correlate variables both before and after a transition to the success of the transition itself; others are identified through qualitative methods such as interview and literature review, and seek to establish a stronger causal link. Some of these factors may or may not be included in a definition of resilience itself, and this depends on the types of criteria and breadth of definition that are applied. These factors are outlined in greater detail below in Section 2.2.

In a similar way, of the 19 examples of ongoing research, none refers explicitly to the term 'resilience', although just under half (nine) consider factors that may be included within a definition of resilience, and may influence the outcome of a military-to-civilian transition.

Box 2.1 below presents a summary overview of the main findings in relation to how 'resilience' is conceptualised in the literature.

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[50] Ursano, Gabbay et al. (2014, 50).

[51] Ursano, Gabbay et al. (2014, 63).

[52] Davies (2014, 4–5).

[53] Davies (2014, 4–5).

[54] Kantar Futures (2017, 10).

Box 2.1: Key findings on resilience

- **Resilience is often <u>not</u> assigned a specific definition** in the literature reviewed: only one-quarter (four) of the academic sources, less than half (five) of the grey literature sources, and none of the examples of ongoing research offer an explicit definition of the term.
- Nonetheless, **a number of common elements of resilience can be identified** both at the individual and group levels: **coping and adaptive skills**, a **positive 'can-do' attitude**, and the **ability to handle challenges**.
- There also appears to be **an important link between the individual and their wider environment**: the resilience of the individual cannot be isolated from the resilience of their family, peers and wider community.
- The literature reviewed finds that **resilience is a process that reflects the ability to continue to function while making life changes, addressing challenges, and recovering from difficult life events**.[55]
- As the term **'resilience' encompasses a wide range of personal character traits,** from hardiness and stamina to 'can-do' attitude and positivity, **it becomes more difficult to systematically analyse factors that support transition**.

2.1.2. Transition

Similarly to 'resilience', a wide range of academic fields focus on 'transition'. It is not only a focus of literature on Service leavers (see the following sections) but is also a key feature of literature on – for example – transition from school to adulthood for youth with autism spectrum disorders,[56] and the psychological wellbeing of individuals undergoing retirement transition.[57] Given this study's focus on UK Service leavers, however, the following sections focus on the transition from military to civilian life.

Review of academic literature

As with 'resilience', the academic literature does not offer a common definition of 'transition' from military to civilian life. Some academic sources, even when actively discussing transition, do not offer an expanded working definition of the concept.[58] Other sources do not focus explicitly on transition but instead elaborate on related concepts: for example, Bobrow et al. (2012) do not define military-civilian 'transition', focusing instead on the 'reintegration' of Service leavers following their departure from the military.[59] Nonetheless, there appears to be a common understanding that Service leaver transition involves a process of adaptation from one culture or identity to another.

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[55] The following section explores the 'life changes' associated with leaving the Armed Forces, while Chapter 4 explores challenges that can affect Service leavers (Sections 4.1 and 4.2), as well as the role of resilience and wider support in addressing these challenges (Section 4.3).

[56] See, for example, Taylor & Seltzer (2011).

[57] See, for example, Wang (2007).

[58] For example: Beech, Gold et al. (2017); Berle & Steel (2015); Binks & Cambridge (2017); Bowen & Martin (2011).

[59] Bobrow, Cook et al. (2013).

In their survey *Making it on Civvy Street*, Black and Papile (2010) describe the transition process for Canadian Service leavers as a cross-cultural experience[60] that may represent a retirement transition, a work transition,[61] or both.[62] Similarly, another Canadian study, titled *Canadian Military Transitioning to Civilian Life,* focuses in particular on culture change when describing the transition process for Service leavers. This source refers to military-civilian transition as '*reverse culture shock*', highlighting the unexpected difficulties that returning personnel may face with adjustment to civilian life.[63] According to this source, transition to civilian life can be compared to a '*cross-cultural transition*' experience, given that Service leavers must develop new cultural skills and understanding in order to adapt to civilian life.[64]

There are a range of interpretations regarding the time period that 'transition' covers. While acknowledging that there is no commonly accepted temporal definition for the transition period, Ray and Heaslip (2011) claim that for most veterans it begins as soon as personnel start to contemplate leaving the military or to understand that an involuntary release may be imminent.[65] Herman and Yarwood (2014) describe transition as an ongoing process rather than a single event that marks a disjuncture between military and civilian life.[66] Transition from military to civilian life is understood as a continuous process associated with the '*disorientation of identity*', with those leaving the Services finding themselves '*betwixt and between*' military and civilian worlds.[67]

Sources focus on particular elements of transition, including those relating to employment and health (including mental health). For example, Knopf, quoting Higate (2001), considers transition from military to civilian life '*at the level of employability, with the deeper emotional and psychological levels largely outside the routine work of resettlement agencies, unless specific problems are noted such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*'.[68] A more specialised study focuses on ex-military personnel who, after leaving the Armed Forces, become involved with the criminal justice system or suffer from mental health problems and substance misuse.[69] Drawing on specific challenges such as alcohol misuse, this paper conceptualises transition in terms of recovery.

Another specialised study identifies four phases that feature in the transition from military to civilian nursing.[70] According to Elliott et al. (2016), '*separating from military life*' is the first stage of transition that is associated with '*contemplating change* 'and '*anticipation of the role change*'. The second phase – '*conflict and chaos*' – relates to the feelings of '*drowning*', '*treading water*', and '*disorientation*' that nurses reported having experienced in their transition.[71] The third stage of '*shifting sands*' signifies a turning point where

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[60] Black & Papile (2010).

[61] Borgen (1997).

[62] Black & Papile (2010).

[63] Ray & Heaslip (2011).

[64] Ray & Heaslip (2011).

[65] Ray & Heaslip (2011).

[66] Herman & Yarwood (2014).

[67] Herman & Yarwood (2014).

[68] Knopf (2012).

[69] Albertson, Irving et al. (2015).

[70] Elliott, Chargualaf et al. (2017).

[71] Elliott, Chargualaf et al. (2017).

the nurses begin to feel more comfortable with ambiguity, while the final stage of '*personal and professional reconstruction*' concludes the transition as the nurses eventually start work in a civilian setting.[72]

Review of grey literature

Similarly to the academic literature, the majority (eight) of grey literature sources do not explicitly define the term 'transition', although all articles consider the transition from military to civilian life in some form. In total, only four of the grey literature sources offer an explicit definition of transition.[73]

In three of the four sources that define 'transition', a relatively simple time-based definition is applied. In Shields et al. (2016), the authors define transition as the '*peri-release*', which refers to the period between six months prior to and two years after leaving the military[74]; in Kantar Futures (2017), 'transition' is defined as the 3-year period following the start of a resettlement programme[75]; and in Williams (2015), the 'transition period' is defined as the first semester in an academic institution for service personnel and veterans undertaking undergraduate study.[76] In all three definitions, the authors acknowledge that they are applying a simplified interpretation of the term 'transition', while emphasising that simplification is needed to facilitate a sufficiently constrained piece of research. In a similar way, the scoping review identifies one example of ongoing research (Families Federation, 2017) that offers a time-based definition of 'transition', referring to individuals who have left the Armed Forces in the last two years, or those who plan to leave before September 2019 (with the study conducted in September 2017).

In contrast to these simpler definitions, McDermott (2007) discusses the nature of 'transition' at considerable length[77] and – in a similar way to the academic literature reviewed – actively avoids a simple temporal definition of 'transition' in favour of a more complex five-stage approach. In defining transition, the author differentiates between a veteran's overarching thoughts and opinions, the period of preparation for leaving, the retention and resettlement periods, the period of rejoining the labour market, and the experiences of civilian employment.[78]

Of the remaining eight sources that do not explicitly define transition, four of the authors provide a similar view to McDermott (2007), and explicitly warn against defining 'transition' according to a particular timeframe.[79] These articles – and that of Rotter (2015) – do however provide a number of insights into the nature of military-to-civilian transition. In particular, Davies (2014) describes this as a complex process that includes a 'becoming' and an 'unbecoming'; changes in identity and the definition of self; changes to agency and the ability to manage an individual's life course; structural changes and changes to the management of the individual's environment; and changes to capital, including physical, human, social, cultural and 'identity' capital.[80] Davies (2015) also notes that the transition from military

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[72] Elliott, Chargualaf et al. (2017).

[73] Kantar Futures (2017); McDermott (2007); Shields et al. (2016); Williams (2015).

[74] Shields, Kuhl et al. (2016, i).

[75] Kantar Futures (2017, 16).

[76] Williams (2015, 8).

[77] McDermott (2007, 38).

[78] McDermott (2007, 212).

[79] BPW Foundation (2007); Davies (2014); Squire (2017); Ursano, Gabbay et al. (2014).

[80] Davies (2014, 3–5).

to civilian life occurs at different speeds across the areas described in the previous sentence,[81] which is a characteristic also highlighted in BWP Foundation (2007).

The three remaining articles do not explicitly discuss the definition or characteristics of 'transition'. In two cases – Morin (2011a) and Morin (2011b) – the term 're-entry' into civilian life is used without providing further elaboration on its meaning, and in one article (Lowe, 2015) the term 'transition' is used extensively, but in a self-evident manner without providing a definition.

Box 2.2 below presents a summary overview of the main findings in relation to how 'transition' is defined in the literature.

Box 2.2: Key findings on transition

- In a similar way to 'resilience', **'transition' does not appear to have a standardised definition** in the literature reviewed.
- Nonetheless, **transition is often viewed as a process of <u>adaptation</u>** from one culture or identity to another.
- A range of <u>**time-based**</u> **interpretations of this adaptation process are provided** in some papers, with **other papers rejecting this approach in favour of a more '<u>staged</u>' approach** focused on the period of preparation for departure, resettlement and re-entry to civilian employment.
- These **approaches are sometimes applied to specific elements of transition** focused on, for example, employment or mental health.[82]

2.1.3. 'Successful transition outcomes'

Review of academic literature

Half the academic sources reviewed offer a definition or means of measuring 'successful transition outcomes'. Of these eight papers, two provide only limited reference to successful transition outcomes by referring to the population of interviewed or surveyed Service leavers who self-identify as 'successful' in their transition.[83] While Service leaver self-assessments could certainly help improve understanding of transition experiences and outcomes, the authors of these two papers do not establish clear criteria for 'transition success', making the exercise of determining transition outcomes subjective and potentially inconsistent within the samples.

Studies that focus on the Service leaver populations in the UK,[84] the United States,[85] and Canada[86] describe successful transitions in relation to various indicators of positive reintegration following departure from the military. Indicators such as finding satisfying work, maintaining stable mental health, and

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[81] Davies (2014, 2).

[82] The challenges associated with these particular aspects of transition for Service leavers are discussed in more detail in Sections 4.1 and 4.2, with a broader discussion of how they can also affect the experiences of comparator groups in Chapter 5.

[83] Herman & Yarwood (2014); Herman & Yarwood (2015).

[84] McGarry, Walklate et al. (2015).

[85] Bobrow, Cook et al. (2013).

[86] Black & Papile (2010).

sustaining successful relationships with family and spouse were highlighted among the most important elements of a positive transition.[87] Other less tangible indicators, such as the feeling of meaning, hope, perceived support and connectedness have also been associated with successful transition outcomes.[88] Elliott et al. (2016) identified similar findings in their study on nurse veterans, for whom a positive transition can be seen in the shift away from feelings of loss of purpose and perceived lack of civilian structure.[89]

'Successful' transition outcomes have also been linked to external policy and programming (see also Section 4.3). For example, one academic study linked successful transitions for Service leavers exiting through the UK Military Correction and Training Centre[90] with their engagement with vocational training while in prison and with early interventions before departure.[91]

Review of grey literature

The term 'success' when applied to military-to-civilian transition is explicitly defined in less than half of the grey literature sources reviewed (four). Nonetheless, at least some conceptualisation of 'success' is presented in all but two sources.[92]

Beginning with the four sources that offer clear definitions of transition 'success', in both McDermott (2007) and Williams (2015) strict definitions are applied that provide clear measures of success. In Williams' study in particular, success is measured across two dependant variables: 'intent to return' and 'academic success', where 'intent to return' is defined as '*expressions of [a veteran's] plan to continue their studies at the same institution during the semester following their participation in this research*', and 'academic success' is measured through an individual's grade-point average.[93] In comparison, McDermott's UK study is less precise and more qualitative in nature, with 'success' defined as a collection of self-reported outcomes. Similarly to the academic literature, McDermott (2007) offers indicators of positive transition that include stable civilian employment, suitable housing, places in school for children (if applicable), and an absence of mental or physical suffering in a way that could be retrospectively attributed to military service.[94]

Both Shields et al. (2016) and Kantar Futures (2017) apply more holistic definitions of transition success. In Shields et al., 'success' is defined as 'achieving personal wellness', and arriving at a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment in life. The definition presented by Shields et al. (2016) includes individuals with chronic pain and mental health conditions who, it is argued, should not be considered inherently unable to

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[87] Black & Papile (2010).

[88] Bobrow, Cook et al. (2013).

[89] Elliott, Chargualaf et al. (2017).

[90] This example demonstrates the variety of types of Service leavers and the difference in transition experiences that they may face upon departure from the military. The different types of Service leavers and associated challenges are analysed respectively in Chapters 3 and 4 of the report.

[91] Van Staden, Fear et al. (2007).

[92] Lowe (2015); Ursano, Gabbay et al. (2014).

[93] Williams (2015, 9).

[94] McDermott (2007, 77).

achieve successful transitions by virtue of their personal health conditions.[95] This is in contrast to McDermott (2007) and Kantar Futures (2017), where the existence of mental health disorders and the need for mental health and/or psychiatric treatment are presented by the authors of the papers as two indicators of an 'unsuccessful' transition.[96]

In articles where transition success is not defined explicitly, a number of approaches are used to assess the nature of a military-to-civilian transition. In Morin (2011a, 2011b), Davies (2014) and Squire (2017), for example, success is implicitly measured by considering the 'difficulty' or 'ease' of a transition. This is applied most clearly in Morin (2011a) and Squire (2017), where both authors provide a five-point scale (very easy, moderately easy, neither difficult nor easy, moderately difficult, and very difficult) for participants of their study to self-assess the ease of their military-to-civilian transitions.[97] Morin (2011b) and Davies (2014) do not provide these types of scales, but nonetheless use terms such as 'difficulty' or 'ease' of transitions without providing explicit definitions for these terms. Rotter (2015) and the BWP Foundation (2007) also provide less concrete and more holistic views of 'success', with Rotter (2015) defining the term as the overcoming of various (albeit undefined) 'challenges', and the BWP Foundation (2007) using a self-reported (and undefined) measure of being 'well-adjusted' to civilian life.

In Ursano et al. (2014) and Lowe (2015), there appears to be no definition of success. However, as the next section illustrates, both articles nonetheless analyse the link between resilience and transition. With regard to the scoping review, none of the examples of ongoing research provide explicit definitions of successful transition, although two articles use the term when referring to the outcomes of transition, namely 'successful' employment.[98]

Box 2.3 provides an overview of key findings in relation to how the literature conceptualises 'successful' transitions.

Box 2.3: Key findings on transition 'success

- Overall, **'successful' transitions** have been described in relation to a number of indicators including **finding satisfying work**, **maintaining stable mental health**, **finding suitable housing** and **sustaining successful family relationships**.[99]
- It also appears that **successful transition outcomes can be linked to external policy and programming** – a finding that is explored further in Section 4.3.
- However, **there is a need for clearer criteria of transition 'success', 'ease' and 'difficulty'** in order to improve consistency and comparability between research papers.

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[95] Shields, Kuhl et al. (2016, 131–2).

[96] Kantar Futures (2017, 37).

[97] Morin (2011a, 2); Squire (2017, 11). This reference uses the language in Squire (2017), although this is very similar to the scale used in Morin (2011a).

[98] Anglia Ruskin University (n.d.-c); Anglia Ruskin University (n.d.-b).

[99] Chapters 4 and 5 describe challenges associated with these different indicators, including employment, mental health, housing and family relationships.

2.2. Exploring links between resilience and transition

Review of academic literature

While most of the analysed sources explore transition pathways for Service leavers, focusing to a greater or lesser extent on the role of resilience, the relationship between the two has not been widely discussed in the academic literature. Where the links between the two concepts are discussed, a range of interpretations are offered. For example, Hourani et al. (2012) consider that previous experience of adapting to change influences individuals' ability to cope with ever-present internal and external stressors[100]; thus resilience may be viewed as a measure of the ability to cope effectively with transition. For Berle and Steel (2015), transitioning military families are said to have an inherent resilience that helps them adjust – and even to thrive – when facing repeated challenges.[101]

Bobrow et al (2012) observe a positive correlation between resilience and successful transition as part of their study on US Service leavers participating in 'The Coming Home Project' (CHP). CHP is a programme developed in order to build military-family resilience[102] in the period of transition and reintegration, with a particular focus on community building and resilience rather than symptom-targeted treatment (see Section 4.3).[103] The programme offers psychoeducational training in wellness practices (mindfulness meditation and relaxation techniques), as well as family life skills (parent education and couples communication).[104]

Among the more narrowly focused studies, a positive correlation between resilience and transition has been identified. For example, in one study, resilience in terms of being able to navigate unfamiliar situations has been found to assist military nurses in navigating uncertainties faced during transition.[105] Another study identifies comradeship as a central aspect of military life that supports a specific transition from substance abuse to recovery for Service leavers through peer support and community activities.[106]

While most studies that identify a connection between resilience and transition outcomes highlight a positive link,[107] Binks and Cambridge (2017) find a more negative relationship between resilience and transition: the article finds that the can-do attitude championed and respected by the military may serve as a barrier to seeking help in the civilian world upon discharge.[108] Similarly, McGarry et al. (2015) identify a negative relationship between resilience and transition from military to civilian life. The study views resilience as a stigma that may hinder a successful and healthy transition for Service leavers by

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[100] Collins English Dictionary defines stressor as an event or experience that causes stress.

[101] Berle & Steel (2015).

[102] According to Bobrow, Cook et al. (2013): the concept of military-family resilience reflects a "service member's ability to effectively adapt to adverse stress and maintain physical and mental well-being."

[103] Bobrow, Cook et al. (2013).

[104] Bobrow, Cook et al. (2013).

[105] Elliott, Chargualaf et al. (2017).

[106] Albertson, Irving et al. (2015).

[107] Albertson, Irving et al. (2015); Bobrow, Cook et al. (2013); Bowen & Martin (2011); Elliott, Chargualaf et al. (2017); Hourani, Bender et al. (2012). The study team is alert to the possibility of tautology in this case – i.e. the possibility that definitions of 'resilience' focus on 'effective coping of transition', which would make 'resilience' and 'successful transition' two sides of the same coin – and are seeking to avoid this as far as possible in our analysis.

[108] Binks & Cambridge (2017).

preventing former military personnel from seeking help and support, whether relating to mental health or any other aspects of civilian life.[109] McGarry et al. (2015) therefore conclude that some of the negative aspects of inherent resilience fostered during service may resurface and take their toll in the transition from military to civilian life.[110]

The analysed academic sources have also identified factors related to resilience that reportedly contribute to successful transition experiences and outcomes. Among the most frequently mentioned contributing factors are **support groups and peer networks** that address the challenges associated with feeling alone and misunderstood in Service leaver transition struggles.[111] Other studies also identify factors related to **personal and family-level flexibility** that can aid reintegration and redefinition of roles and responsibilities.[112] As illustrated in Figure 2.1, factors such as **fulfilling employment**, **effective communication**, **mental health** and **positive perception of challenges** are also mentioned among the positive drivers of transition.[113]

Figure 2.1 : Drivers of successful transition
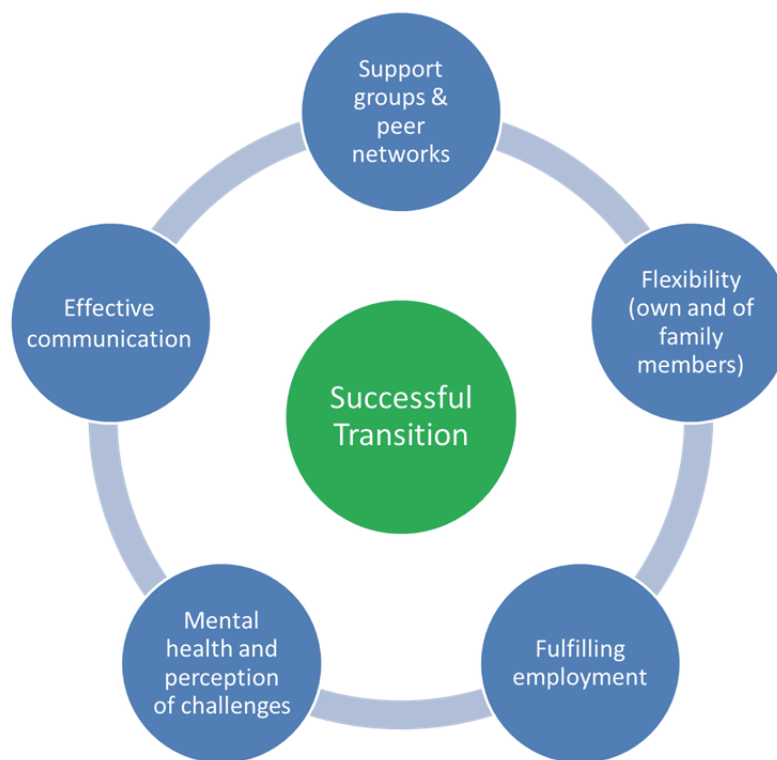
Source: Adapted from Black (2010), Elliott et al. (2016), McGarry et al. (2015)

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[109] McGarry, Walklate et al. (2015).

[110] McGarry, Walklate et al. (2015).

[111] Albertson, Irving et al. (2015); Elliott, Chargualaf et al. (2017); Ray & Heaslip (2011).

[112] Berle & Steel (2015); Black & Papile (2010); Elliott, Chargualaf et al. (2017).

[113] Black & Papile (2010); Elliott, Chargualaf et al. (2017); McGarry, Walklate et al. (2015).

Some studies also identify negative attributes that reportedly complicate rather than aid transition, such as **unemployment**, **financial issues**, and **relationship breakdown**.[114] McGarry et al. (2015) identified that some Service leavers may find themselves **lacking transferable skills**, which can negatively influence civilian employment outcomes.[115] Meanwhile others can be **disenchanted with civilian life** and reluctant to reintegrate effectively. McGarry et al. (2015) also highlighted external conditions that may negatively influence Service leaver transition to a civilian environment. According to their study, UK personnel are often recruited from poorer areas, so returning to the same **socioeconomic disadvantages** can inhibit successful transition due to the lack of opportunities and other negative factors associated with poorer socioeconomic environments.

Review of grey literature

Rather than focusing on the relationship between Service leaver resilience and transition experiences and outcomes, the discussion in the grey literature tends to focus on factors that support, hinder or do not affect the success of a military-to-civilian transition.[116] As Table 2.2 illustrates below, a large number of factors are identified in the grey literature that relate to the success of military-to-civilian transitions. For each grey literature source reviewed, these factors have been categorised into one of four categories: **positively linked** (i.e. the factor supports a successful transition), **negatively linked** (i.e. the factor reduces the likelihood of a successful transition), **not linked** (i.e. no link is explicitly made between the factor and the success of a transition, e.g. no statistical correlation), or **some link** (i.e. a relationship is noted and defined as neither positive nor negative).

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[114] Hourani, Bender et al. (2012). Please refer to Søndergaard et al. (2016) for an overview of the existing evidence base on relationship breakdown among Service leavers.

[115] McGarry, Walklate et al. (2015).

[116] Only two articles – Rotter (2015) and Ursano, Gabbay et al. (2014) – make any explicit link between resilience and successful transition.

Table 2.2: Links identified between different factors and transition 'success' for Service leavers[117]

Factors positively linked to successful military-to-civilian transition	Being an officer; having a clear understanding of missions while in Service; being a college graduate; attending religious services frequently (for post-9/11 veterans only);[118] resilience; bifurcation (psychological distancing and separation between military and civilian life); integration (psychological reconciliation of military and civilian life);[119] the presence of a strong and supportive family; transferable skills; level of preparedness; the ability to make sense of the transition;[120] 'owning' the transition and being proactive; having a supportive spouse; planning ahead;[121] feeling academically prepared (transitioning to higher education); perceiving professors valued their military experience (transitioning to higher education);[122] acceptance that army Service was ending; beginning preparations early for service departure; a recognition of adaptability as a key factor; ability to adapt skills acquired in the military to a civilian context; an awareness that some civilian employers have a gap in knowledge of the military; an awareness that civilian workers do not think and work in the same way as the military; adapting personal approach to work;[123] participation in military pre-separation programme; beginning job search early before leaving the military; level of appreciation of their service by both employers and co-workers;[124] resilience in family; family beliefs and their ability to find meaning in adverse situations (including factors such as optimism, a sense of hope, an ability to comprehend what is going on, religious or transcendent beliefs);[125] desire to keep moving forward; supportive family and community;[126] degree and type of community support; networks outside of military; practical, psychological and emotional support from family and friends.[127]

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[117] Although presented here in a single table, it is important to note that the research methods used to identify these relationships between 'factors' and 'success' varied greatly between articles. As noted in Table 2.2 above, a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods are used across the grey literature, each with a different area of focus and degree of scope. The type and degree of evidence behind the links in this table are therefore also variable, as is the strength of any factor identified as 'positive' or 'negative'.

[118] Morin (2011a).

[119] Rotter (2015).

[120] Shields (2016).

[121] Squire (2017).

[122] Williams (2015).

[123] McDermott (2007).

[124] BPW Foundation (2007).

[125] Ursano (2014).

[126] Lowe (2015).

Factors negatively linked to successful military-to-civilian transition	Traumatic experiences during military service; serious injury; serving post-9/11; serving in a combat zone; serving with someone killed or injured; being married while in service (post-9/11 only); [128] the degree to which 'military resilience' has a negative impact on civilian life, such as a reluctance to share emotions and seek help; early Service leavers; leavers who receive less resettlement support;[129] physical illness and injury (including chronic pain and poly-trauma); mental health risk factors; individual stoicisms derived from military culture; institutional culture and discouragement to prepare;[130] high academic expectations (when transitioning into further education); feeling academically overwhelmed (when transitioning into further education);[131] failure to join a professional network or professional organisation to assist in searching for work; failure to exploit mentoring schemes; failure to mine contacts in network when searching for employment;[132] difficulties associated with identity and loss of sense of purpose; difficulties identifying the 'civilian [veterans] want to be' (vision of future self); exclusively 'military' networks; area of service (Army veterans found to be less likely to be employed than Navy or RAF); gender (female veterans found to be less likely to be employed than male veterans); ethnicity (black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals found to be less likely to be in employment). [133]
Factors with some link to the outcome of military-to-civilian transition (identified as neither positive nor negative)	Structural factors (such as branch and role within the military, age, and years of experience); whether transition is viewed as an issue of employability or an issue of identity; whether identity changes automatically, or requires deliberate steps to change; the ability to recreate agency in different phases of life; former socio-economic background and level of education before the military; level of identity capital; degree to which individuals prefer their former military identity; the transferability of military skills;[134] nature of transition (early, voluntary, end-of-service etc.); individual approach to transition; meaning attributed to transition; wider social context;[135] success in finding satisfying work; mental health; relationship with family;[136] identifying as non-white; experience determining military educational benefit eligibility;

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[127] Kantar Futures (2017).

[128] Morin (2011a); Morin (2011b).

[129] Davies (2014).

[130] Shields (2016).

[131] Williams (2015).

[132] BPW Foundation (2007).

[133] Kantar Futures (2017).

[134] Davies (2014).

[135] Shields (2016).

[136] Squire (2017).

	experience obtaining credit for military service;[137] military background; resettlement; self-perception; perspective on former military Service; family situation; financial arrangements; effects of army service; perceptions and the influence of army career; institutionalisation (identified as potentially problematic for early service leavers, but often beneficial for those completing a 22-year service who are able to exploit the benefits from their military experience);[138] personal resources (e.g. determination, confidence, 'resilience'); social resources (e.g. family, social and professional networks); institutional resources (e.g. transferable qualifications and skills); nature of employment; financial status and awareness of finances; personal health; nature of personal skills and qualifications; degree of social integration and social networks; type of housing and physical environment; degree of support from cultural and social environment; pre-joining profile; intensity of military deployments; expectations around transition; civilian work experience; early Service departure; engagement of family in resettlement process; experience in the military during final stage of career; age; length of service; officer vs other ranks. [139]
Factors with no link to the outcome of military-to-civilian transition	Race and ethnicity; age at time of discharge; having young children while serving; length of time in the military; number of times deployed;[140] financial factors;[141] personal characteristics (sense of responsibility, self- esteem, friendliness, goal setting, honesty, integrity, team work, leadership skills, conflict resolution, ability to work well with others etc.)[142]

Source: RAND analysis (2017) of (BPW Foundation 2007; Davies 2014; Kantar Futures 2017; Lowe 2015; McDermott 2007; Morin 2011a, b; Rotter 2015; Shields, Kuhl et al. 2016; Ursano, Gabbay et al. 2014; Williams 2015).

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[137] Williams (2015).

[138] McDermott (2007).

[139] Kantar Futures (2017).

[140] Morin (2011a).

[141] Williams (2015).

[142] BPW Foundation (2007).

In addition, the following analysis discusses factors identified in the grey literature that are linked – either positively or negatively – to military-to-civilian transition. The discussion is structured around the following thematic clusters derived from the grey literature reviewed:

- Individual psychology;
- Personal health (physical and mental);
- Operational experience in the military;
- Structure of experience within the military (such as rank, length of service etc.);
- Experiences while transitioning;
- Role of family and friends;
- Role of the community and characteristics of the environment;
- Personal characteristics (such as race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic background); and
- Personal skills and non-military experiences.

Reflecting findings from the systematic review of academic literature, some of the most commonly identified factors discussed in the grey literature are those related to the **individual psychology** of Service personnel during their transition from military to civilian life. This not only refers to factors that may be traditionally associated with resilience, such as determination, confidence, self-esteem, and a desire to 'keep moving forward',[143] but also to more complex considerations surrounding identity, including whether a transition is viewed as an issue of identity;[144] the degree to which individuals are able to accept the end of their military life; and the ability to forgo a military identity and establish a new, civilian, identity.[145] A number of sources also discuss the importance of understanding military-to-civilian transition, and highlight factors such as the ability to manage expectations of the transition before leaving the military,[146] the ability to make sense of and attribute meaning to the transition,[147] and awareness that civilian life will be different from their military experiences and will require them to adapt.[148]

The grey literature finds that failure to adapt and seek assistance during the transition is linked on a number of occasions to 'military resilience', which is in turn linked to negative psychological factors such as institutionalisation and an unwillingness to express emotions.[149] This validates findings from the systematic review of academic literature in relation to the negative role that resilience can play in transition: as described above, some academic papers view the toughness and 'can-do' approach championed by the military as a barrier to seeking help in the civilian world.[150]

'Individual psychology' is a focus that is also reflected in the ongoing research identified by the scoping review. In particular, two pieces of ongoing research – the Behavioural Insights Team (2017) and

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[143] BPW Foundation (2007); Kantar Futures (2017); Lowe (2015).

[144] Davies (2014).

[145] Davies (2014); McDermott (2007).

[146] Kantar Futures (2017).

[147] Shields, Kuhl et al. (2016).

[148] McDermott (2007).

[149] Davies (2014); McDermott (2007).

[150] Binks & Cambridge (2017); McGarry, Walklate et al. (2015).

Warwick University (2017a) – are investigating the psychological and behavioural factors that may influence the success of a military-to-civilian transition. For example, the Behavioural Insights Team (supported by FiMT) are seeking to identify specific behaviours involved in the transition process, and are using this information to suggest ways in which these behaviours can be influenced to help Service leavers benefit more from available support. At Warwick University (2017a), an ongoing study seeks to identify and understand the experiences that provide veterans with happiness, satisfaction and wellbeing, and understand how these experiences link to their experiences in the military and can play a role in the integration of military experiences into daily civilian life.

A second area of focus across the grey literature is **personal health**, which includes both physical and mental health of Service leavers. The existence of mental health issues – including anxiety, PTSD and brain damage – is explicitly mentioned on a number of occasions as a factor that hinders the successful transition into civilian life,[151] although as discussed earlier in this REA, the existence or absence of mental health issues is considered in a number of ways by authors across the sample of grey literature. Discussions of mental health are also apparent in most analyses on physical health included in this REA, which typically consider the impact of severe physical injuries sustained while serving on deployment in conflict zones.[152] As Morin (2011b) identifies, 'veterans who suffered major service-related injuries are more than twice as likely as their more fortunate comrades to say they had difficulties readjusting to civilian life …are almost three times as likely as other veterans to report they have suffered from post-traumatic stress (PTS) […] [a]nd they are less likely in later life to be in overall good health or to hold full-time jobs'.[153]

It is not only physical injuries but also particular **operational experience in the military** that affect the mental health of both serving personnel and veterans. Authors who consider these experiences focus primarily on deployments into combat, with three authors – Morin (2011a), McDermott (2007) and Kantar Futures (2017) – investigating the impact of combat experiences on the success of future transition. Morin (2011a) provides the most granular analysis, looking not only at the number of deployments, but also linking the experience of transition to a veteran's experiences on deployment, including whether they served in combat zones, whether they fully understood their missions, and whether they experienced any form of trauma, such as involvement in the act of killing or witnessing the death of other personnel.[154]

In addition to combat experiences, a number of authors also consider the importance of **'structural' experiences of individuals within the military**. This refers to a range of factors that describe the more administrative elements of an individual's career, such as rank[155], branch and role within the military,[156] length of time served in the military,[157] age of departure,[158] and the nature of this departure (voluntary,

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[151] Morin (2011a); Morin (2011b); Shields, Kuhl et al. (2016); Squire (2017).

[152] Morin (2011a); Morin (2011b); Shields, Kuhl et al. (2016).

[153] Morin (2011b, 2).

[154] Morin (2011a).

[155] Morin (2011a).

[156] Davies (2014).

[157] Davies (2014).

[158] Davies (2014); Morin (2011a).

Early Service Leaver (ESL), or end-of-service leaver).[159] In many instances, these factors are identified as important without establishing a positive or negative link to the success of a transition, although one study does find that officers correlate positively with more successful transitions,[160] while early Service leavers are said to experience more difficult transitions.[161]

In addition to the structural experiences within the military, **experiences while transitioning** from the military are also identified and discussed in a number of sources. Some articles focus on particular support programmes, such as pre-separation training programmes provided by the military, or post-departure programmes provided by non-governmental organisations (see Section 4.3 for further discussion of support programmes). In most cases, support programmes are considered to be beneficial to transition in the short term, but a number of authors question their effectiveness in supporting the long-term transition of veterans.[162] Other sources focus on the individual choices made by Service leavers, highlighting the importance of planning ahead and taking a proactive approach,[163] the positive impact of joining professional networks and professional organisations outside the military,[164] and the benefit of mentoring schemes and leveraging civilian contacts.[165]

As with the academic literature, the role of networks in the context of **family and friends** is discussed widely within the grey literature. As Ursano et al. (2014) describe in detail, the resilience of a family is intrinsically linked to the success of an individual veteran's transition from military to civilian life, and factors such as the presence of a supportive spouse,[166] dependent children,[167] and the strength of a belief system within the family[168] are typically viewed as positive contributing factors to a successful transition. In one source, however, these more established views are contested, as Morin (2011a) finds no link between having young children and the ease of transition from the military, and moreover finds a negative correlation between being married and the ease of transition on leaving the Armed Forces.[169] Morin (2011a) attributes this observation to the '*strain that deployments put on a marriage*', both '*before a married veteran is discharged and after the veteran leaves the service to rejoin his or her family*'.[170]

Extending this systems approach one stage further, the **role of the community** and the **characteristics of an individual's environment** are also identified factors that contribute to the success of a transition. This includes factors such as the type of housing and physical environment that a veteran occupies, the nature of an individual's employment, the degree of community support, and the attitude of colleagues and other

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[159] Davies (2014); Kantar Futures (2017); Shields, Kuhl et al. (2016).

[160] Morin (2011a), although this is contested in Kantar Futures (2017).

[161] Davies (2014); Kantar Futures (2017).

[162] See, for example, BPW Foundation (2007); Davies (2014).

[163] McDermott (2007); Squire (2017).

[164] BPW Foundation (2007); Kantar Futures (2017).

[165] BPW Foundation (2007).

[166] Kantar Futures (2017); Lowe (2015); Shields, Kuhl et al. (2016); Ursano, Gabbay et al. (2014).

[167] Kantar Futures (2017); Lowe (2015); Shields, Kuhl et al. (2016); Ursano, Gabbay et al. (2014).

[168] Ursano, Gabbay et al. (2014).

[169] This latter phenomenon is only observed for veterans who left the military after 9/11, although there are a number of stated limitations in the research design that may contribute to this observation. See Morin (2011a, 5–6).

[170] Morin (2011a, 6).

associates towards an individual's military service.[171] In particular, both BPW Foundation (2007) and Williams (2015) find a positive correlation between the supportive attitudes of colleagues towards an individual's military service, and the success of their transition into the civilian sector.

In relation to the wider environment, ongoing research identified by the scoping review highlights the role of support programmes in assisting military veterans and Service leavers in coping with their civilian lives. One study – Northumbria University (2017) – is seeking to identify factors that explain the reasons why veterans do not typically access alcohol support programmes, and to develop recommendations to help improve uptake of support in this area. A second study – University of Chester (n.d.) – is assessing the impact of a particular (yet unnamed) strategy that is designed to motivate veterans to register with their GP. Williamson (2017) also looks at the signposting of support for domestic violence and abuse in service families and families transitioning from the military.

Discussion on the role of community may also be linked to a range of **personal characteristics**, and the perception of these characteristics held by society. This includes factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic background, all of which are explored in several articles across the grey literature. In one study – Morin (2011a) – no relationship is found between race, gender and the difficulty of military-to-civilian transition, but this contrasts with the findings of Kantar Futures (2017) and Williams (2015), who conclude that female Service leavers and individuals identifying as 'non-white' both experience more difficult transitions when leaving the armed forces.

Finally, the **skills and non-military experiences** of individuals are also explored in a number of articles, with authors exploring the importance of previous academic experience,[172] the nature of personal skills and qualifications,[173] and the transferability of these skills from a military to a civilian environment.[174] The existence of transferable and adaptable skills and previous experience of higher education before joining the military, are both generally considered to be positive factors in shaping the success of an individual's military-to-civilian transition.[175]

To focus in more detail on one grey literature source identified by the study team as being particularly helpful in identifying factors that positively and negatively affect individuals' transition experiences, Table 2.3 describes the objectives, methods and key conclusions of a US study on transition from the military to civilian life.[176] This article is summarised here as the research team considers it particularly methodologically sound and clear in its definition of factors that may influence the ease or difficulty of transition. It is also the only quantitative study reviewed in the REA of grey literature that considers factors across different types of Service leavers, as opposed to focusing specifically on one factor or one sub-group of ex-personnel.

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[171] BPW Foundation (2007); Kantar Futures (2017); Squire (2017); Williams (2015).

[172] Davies (2014); Kantar Futures (2017); Morin (2011a); Williams (2015).

[173] Kantar Futures (2017); McDermott (2007).

[174] Davies (2014); Kantar Futures (2017); McDermott (2007); Shields, Kuhl et al. (2016).

[175] McDermott (2007); Morin (2011a); Shields, Kuhl et al. (2016).

[176] Morin (2011a). It should be noted that, as stated in Table 1.1, it was beyond the scope of the study to assess the applicability of non-UK source material to the UK context.

Table 2.3: Example of study highlighting factors that affect transition experiences

Study	Morin, Rich. 2011a. 'The Difficult Transition from Military to Civilian Life.' Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C.: Pew Social Trends.
Purpose	The purpose of the study was to identify factors that influence the self-reported level of difficulty of transition for US veterans when leaving the military. In other words: why do some veterans have a hard time readjusting to civilian life while others make the transition with little or no difficulty?[177]
Scope	The analysis was based on a survey of 1,853 veterans from both before and after 9/11 in the US Army, US Navy, US Air Force, US Marine Corps and US Coast Guard. The study considered 18 demographic and attitudinal variables, and investigated their role in transition against a 5-point scale that recorded the self-reported difficulty of re-entry into civilian life.
Methods	• Survey • Logistic regression
Limitations identified by the article author	None specified
Key findings	• Four factors are identified as positive predictors of re-entry: being an officer, having a clear understanding of missions while in service, being a college graduate, and attending religious services frequently (for post-9/11 veterans only). • Six variables correlate to a more difficult re-entry: traumatic experience(s), serious injury, serving post-9/11, serving in a combat zone, serving with someone killed or injured, and being married while in service (post-9/11 only). The study also finds that veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress (PTS) and/or experience flashbacks are less likely to report that they had an 'easy time' when re-entering civilian life (between 30-40 percentage points lower). • Eight variables are identified as poor predictors of the ease of transition: race and ethnicity, age at time of discharge, young children while serving, length of time in the military, and number of times deployed.

Source: (Morin 2011a)

Box 2.4 below presents a summary overview of the main findings on how the relationships between resilience and transition are conceptualised in the literature.

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[177] Morin (2011a, 1).

Box 2.4: Key findings on links between resilience and transition

- The **role of resilience in shaping Service leavers' transition experiences has <u>not</u> been widely discussed** in the literature reviewed.
- When the role of resilience *is* discussed, **most studies see a <u>positive</u> link between resilience and successful transition**: resilience can better equip individuals to navigate uncertainty, adapt to change, and cope with the challenges associated with transition.
- The **literature also identifies a number of factors related to resilience that can assist smooth transition** – including **supportive peer networks**, **fulfilling employment, family flexibility, good mental health** and a **positive perception of challenges** (some of which are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4).
- However, **several sources identify a more <u>negative</u> relationship** given that the can-do attitude championed by the military may, in some cases, act as a barrier to seeking support in civilian life.
- This mixed picture shows that **there is not currently a conclusive body of evidence to validate, or undermine, the claim that resilience plays an important role in UK Service leavers' transition** to civilian life.
- What can be said, however, is that **there is an (albeit limited) body of literature that links transition experiences to factors that are indirectly related to resilience,** such as employment, mental health, personal relationships and financial issues.

2.3. Research gaps

As discussed in Sections 2.1-2.2, the resilience and transition review highlights several major research gaps. The recommendations presented in Section 6.2 are designed to address a number of these gaps which could, in turn, help improve policy and service provision in this area. In particular, there appears to be **limited analysis of the relationship between Service leaver resilience and transition** in the existing academic and grey literature, both in the UK military context and more widely. The relationship between transition and resilience has not been extensively or explicitly discussed in the UK military context beyond the ability of personnel and their families to cope with the demands of military service.[178] **Much of the existing research tends to focus on the role of PTSD in Service leavers**; in most cases these sources have been excluded based on limited relevance to the scope of our study. The existing academic **literature appears to focus on transition from military deployment** (typically in relation to Iraq and Afghanistan), rather than on transition from military life to the civilian environment more generally.

Evidence gaps also remain with regard to literature on the **role that resilience plays in individual transition pathways**. Another limitation refers to the **range of definitions of 'resilience' and 'transition'** across the studies reviewed. This gap is noted in two studies, Rotter (2015) and Shields et al. (2016), which report that there is no unified conceptualisation of transition and resilience within the academic literature, and observe that different sources use diverse definitions of these two core concepts.[179] As noted

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[178] Hoge (2010); Wolpert (2000).

[179] Rotter (2015); Shields, Kuhl et al. (2016).

in Section 2.1, the term **'resilience' encompasses a wide range of functions and personal characteristics, which means that it can be challenging to systematically analyse factors that support transition**.

The grey literature also highlights:

- A reported **lack of research and understanding of transition during the short-term period** (two to three years) after leaving the military;[180]
- A **shortage of evaluations of intervention programmes to increase resilience in leavers**, and in particular regarding the longer-term impact of intervention programmes;[181] and
- A reported **lack of research on the military-to-civilian transition of specific groups of leavers** (including **medically-released veterans**,[182] **veteran students**,[183] **economically inactive veterans**,[184] **non-commissioned officers** (NCOs),[185] and **female veterans** in transition[186]).

In relation to the final research gap outlined above, the following chapter provides an overview of how groups or 'types' of leavers have been categorised in the existing literature.

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[180] Kantar Futures (2017); Shields, Kuhl et al. (2016).

[181] Kantar Futures (2017). While the study team did not search explicitly for evaluations of intervention programmes, we would expect to have encountered these through our literature search (please refer to Annex A for an overview of search terms, and inclusion and exclusion criteria).

[182] Squire (2017).

[183] Williams (2015).

[184] Kantar Futures (2017).

[185] Kantar Futures (2017).

[186] BPW Foundation (2007).

3. Types of Service leavers

In this chapter, we present findings in relation to RQ2: '*What Service leaver "types" can be identified, and how can these groups be categorised?*' The sections below explore whether, and if so how, Service leavers have been categorised as different groups or 'types' in the literature reviewed (Section 3.1), as well as developing an indicative 'Service leavers data capture template' as a basis for more robust research and targeted support (Section 3.2). Findings in this chapter are based on the 'Service leaver types and challenges review', which constitutes an REA of academic and grey literature. As described in more detail in Annex B, this REA initially identified 57 sources of potential relevance, with 29 of these papers included in the final review.[187]

3.1. Existing approaches to categorising Service leavers

UK MOD documentation offers a classification of Service leavers by discharge type.[188] Three categories exist according to UK Joint Service Publication (JSP) 534 (Issue 17, September 2017): Early Service Leaver (ESL), 'normal discharge' Service leaver, and 'medical discharge' Service leaver.[189] These categories are employed across the three Services, and are used to determine the level of resettlement to which different Service leavers are entitled. According to JSP 534 (Issue 17, 2017), the following resettlement provisions are available:

1. **Core Resettlement Programme**: intended for those having served over six years, and all medical discharges;
2. **Employment Support Programme**: intended for those having served between four and six years;
3. **Career Transition Partnership Future Horizons**: intended for ESLs (on an opt-in/opt-out basis) and those having been discharged compulsorily;
4. **Specialist Support Programme**: intended for all wounded, injured and sick personnel.[190]

Categorising Service leavers by discharge type is the most common grouping in the literature. However, the JSP classification outlined above is not applied in a standardised way across the literature reviewed, with other terms used including 'medical release', 'voluntary [leave] prior to contract ending', 'release at

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[187] Please refer to Section B.2 of Annex B for a more detailed overview of the literature included in this review, and to Section A.2 of Annex A for explanation of how this review was conducted.

[188] JSP (2017).

[189] JSP (2017).

[190] JSP (2017).

end of contract', 'other'[191] or 'high-risk discharge' and 'low-risk discharge'.[192] Moreover, Expert Workshop participants noted the academic literature tends to reflect the MOD's definition of the term 'Early Service Leaver'; however, participants noted that a number of organisations interpret this term differently.

Overall, there is no commonly adopted typology of Service leavers in the literature reviewed. As discussed in more detail below, there is also a lack of homogeneity in reference to Service leaver types which makes it difficult to compare Service leavers, as well as to assess the degree to which a certain type of Service leaver is more likely to be affected by a particular challenge, or set of challenges, upon their transition to civilian life.

While no commonly adopted typology of Service leavers was identified in the literature consulted, the sources reviewed broadly categorise Service leavers into three clusters:

1. **Discharge type**: relating to the circumstances of discharge (e.g. ESLs);
2. **Physical and mental characteristics**: relating to the physical, and/or mental health, and/or behavioural state of an individual upon departure (e.g. for example, substance abuse); and
3. **Identity**: relating to personal identity or sense of self/belonging (e.g. having a strong military identity).

It is important to note, however, that these three clusters can be cross-cutting and are not mutually exclusive: for example, a Service leaver can have a strong military identity (cluster 3), and have been medically discharged (cluster 1) due to mental health issues (cluster 2).

3.1.1. Discharge type

The first cluster, and the one most commonly used in the literature we reviewed, focuses on 'discharge type'; that is, how and why a Service leaver leaves the Armed Forces. These types of categorisations broadly correspond to those used in UK government documentation. Figure 3.1 illustrates the types of Service leavers included in this cluster, although this is not intended to be an exhaustive representation of all sub-types.

Figure 3.1 Service leavers by discharge type

ESLs
•   While under training
–   Discharged electively
–   Discharged compulsorily
•   Trained personnel
–   Discharged compulsorily for disciplinary matters
'Normal' discharge
•   On completion of their engagement
•   On having submitted their notice to leave

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[191] Black & Papile (2010).

[192] Brignone et al. (2017).

•   Redundancy
Medical discharge
Other

•   Unsuitable for Service (unable or unwilling to continue)
 	
      •   Compassionate discharge
 	
      •   Administrative discharge (civil conviction, physical fitness, financial mismanagement, persistent poor conduct and failing a random drug test, disciplinary, misconduct)

Source: Binks & Cambridge (2017); Bergman et al. (2014); Trajectory (n.d.); JSP (2017); Giebel et al. (2014); NAO (2007); Godier et al. (2017); Finnegan (2016); Fossey (2010); Brignone et al. (2017)

ESL

The main focus in the UK literature appears to be on the ESL category. Of all the 'types' identified, the ESL category is the type that appears most frequently throughout the literature reviewed. This is due to the fact that a number of studies[193] have found those in this particular category to have faced the widest range of challenges with regard to their transition into civilian life, an issue which is described in more detail in Chapter 4.

ESLs are Service personnel who leave the military before completing the minimum term of their contract. This refers to personnel who have left before their minimum four years of Service.[194] ESLs are not eligible for the full resettlement support available for Service leavers (more detail provided in Chapter 4). In addition, the ESL category is a relatively heterogeneous group: ESL Service leavers can be trained or untrained,[195] and can have had (or not have had) deployment or combat experience, as shown in Figure 3.1.[196]

Indeed, there appears to be a broad characterisation of ESLs within the literature. One study assesses that '*the majority of the ESLs were from the Army (76.4%), and were predominantly male (95.8%), White (96.6%), and untrained (80.8%).*'[197] It also identifies that the average length of service is 386 days, and the mean age on discharge is 21.6 years. In terms of discharge type, 47.9 percent of the ESLs from their database had taken voluntary discharge.[198] A different study also attempts to describe ESLs, finding that '*ESLs were more likely to be younger, female, not in a relationship, to have been in the Army and to have held a lower rank than non-ESLs.*'[199] In addition, that study notes a trend for ESLs to report '*higher levels of childhood adversity.*'[200] In addition, ESLs are reported to have the poorest mental health compared to other

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[193] Binks & Cambridge (2017); Bergman et al. (2014); Trajectory (n.d.); JSP (2017); Giebel et al. (2014).

[194] JSP (2017).

[195] The study team uses the definition provided by Kapur et al. (2009): '"trained" refers to individuals who have completed phase 1 (basic) and phase 2 (skill-based) training.'

[196] Trajectory (n.d.).

[197] Godier et al. (2017).

[198] Godier et al. (2017).

[199] This was a finding of Buckman et al. (2012). However, it should be noted that these descriptions depend on the nature of the data informing the study in question.

[200] Buckman et al. (2012).

types of Service leavers.[201] The overall ESL characteristics based on these two studies can be drawn out as being younger than other discharge types, in the Army, of lower rank, with a propensity for poor mental health.

Normal discharge

A 'normal discharge Service leaver'[202] is a person who has either completed their term of engagement, submitted their notice to leave, or been made redundant. This type of Service leaver is eligible for full resettlement support, the Core Resettlement Programme, which includes career and financial support, access to vocational training, and other transition support relating to housing and retirement.[203] This type of discharge can include either voluntary or involuntary departure from the services. Comparatively, there appears to be less focus in the literature reviewed on 'normal' discharge Service leavers or those seemingly less likely to face challenges during or after their transition to civilian life.

Medically discharged

Medically discharged Service leavers are those 'deemed medically unfit to carry on with service'.[204] JSP 534 (Issue 17, September 2017) defines them as *'those who are Wounded, Injured and Sick (WIS) and those who are likely to be discharged from the Services on medical grounds.'*[205] This type of release can be due to disorders (physical or mental) or to operationally-related injuries.[206] As with 'normal' discharge and ESLs, this type of discharge can be either voluntary or involuntary.

Other

The literature reviewed also mentions several types of discharge that fall outside the three categories described above. For example, some personnel have been deemed unsuitable for Service: they may be unwilling to continue with their Service (a categorisation used by the British Army and Royal Navy),[207] or deemed unable to continue due to their temperament. Other Service leavers may wish to leave on compassionate grounds.[208] However, administrative discharge, which includes matters such as poor physical fitness, financial mismanagement, persistent poor conduct, or failing a random drug test, tends to involve involuntary leave.[209]

3.1.2. Physical and mental characteristics of Service leavers

A second cluster of Service leaver type used in the literature reviewed focuses on the physical health, mental health and behavioural conditions that may cause a person to leave the military, or 'types' of leavers that may be more vulnerable than others upon departure. Several examples from this cluster are presented in Figure 3.2 below.

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[201] Giebel et al. (2014); Binks & Cambridge (2017).

[202] JSP (2017); Godier et al. (2017).

[203] JSP (2017).

[204] Godier et al. (2017).

[205] JSP (2017).

[206] Finnegan (2016).

[207] Godier et al. (2017).

[208] NAO (2007); Godier et al. (2017).

[209] Godier et al. (2017); Murphy et al. (2017); Buckman et al. (2012).

Figure 3.2 Examples of Service leavers' physical and mental characteristics of leave

Physical disability[210]
• Operational-related injuries
• Non-operational injuries
• Prior medical disorders, e.g. diabetes
Substance and/or alcohol misuse
• Alcohol
• Drugs
Mental health issues
• Depression
• Anxiety
Pregnancy

Source: Finnegan (2016); Giebel at al. (2014); Brignone et al. (2017)

The categories within this cluster include physical disability,[211] substance and/or alcohol misuse,[212] and mental health problems.[213] However, in the case of the latter two categories, the literature does not specify whether these issues are caused by pre-Service factors not related to military Service, experiences during military Service or by transition challenges.

Pregnancy was noted as another departure characteristic by Buckman et al. (2012), although it was not discussed extensively in the literature reviewed. Pregnancy was considered to be linked to the trend of women leaving the Armed Forces earlier than men.[214] Age was another defining characteristic discussed in the literature, in particular in relation to younger personnel who, according to certain sources reviewed, may face more challenges upon departure (detailed further in Chapter 4).[215]

Discharge type has also been associated with mental health issues. In the United States, a study by Brignone et al. (2017) found that '*disability, disqualified, and misconduct discharge are all strongly associated with mental health and behavioural vulnerabilities.*'[216] The same study also found that having a physical disability might increase the risk for psychiatric disorders.[217] The authors note that Service leavers who may be more vulnerable after leaving the military may have had mental health or behavioural issues, either from their time in the military or prior to that.[218]

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[210] Finnegan (2016).

[211] Giebel et al. (2014); Brignone et al. (2017).

[212] Giebel et al. (2014).

[213] Finnegan (2016).

[214] Buckman et al. (2012).

[215] Bergman et al. (2014); Kapur et al. (2009).

[216] Brignone et al. (2017).

[217] Brignone et al. (2017).

[218] Brignone et al. (2017).

3.1.3. Service leaver identity

The final cluster of Service leavers discussed in the literature reviewed relates to personal identity or sense of self/belonging. While this is not the most commonly discussed cluster, it was used in some sources to explain which types of Service leavers may have more difficulty with the transition process. This cluster is presented in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3 Examples of Service leavers by identity type

Strong military identity
•   Loss of identity in civilian settings
Unable to justify military past
•   Weary of Armed Forces lifestyle
Belief that period in military has made no impact on self or identity
Unable to reconcile civilian identity to military identity
•   Lack of appreciation by civilian institutions of the skills gained during military Service
•   Lack of civilian structure
•   Loss of purpose

Source: Walker (2012); Binks & Cambridge (2017); Walker (2012); Ahern et al. (2015)

The literature often refers to these identity types in order to differentiate between how Service leavers view their military past and how they deal with transition. For example, two sources compare Service leavers who have a 'strong internalised military identity' to those who have a less internalised military identity, stating that the latter will experience an easier transition to civilian life.[219] Binks and Cambridge (2017) note that the wider the military and civilian divide, the greater the *'ingroup favouritism and outgroup discrimination'*.[220]

This cluster also includes categories such as Service leavers who downgrade the significance of their military past upon returning to civilian life. According to the literature, this category refers to individuals who either go through a life changing event (e.g. pregnancy) or become weary of the lifestyle.[221] The other categories include a belief that being in the military has not affected their overall identity,[222] and being unable to reconcile their military and civilian identities.[223] The latter includes feelings of disconnection with civilians; (real or perceived) lack of transition support from the military; lack of appreciation by civilian institutions of the skills gained during military Service; the relatively unstructured civilian setting compared to the military one; and a loss of purpose.[224]

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[219] Binks & Cambridge (2017); Davies (2014).

[220] Binks & Cambridge (2017).

[221] Walker (2012).

[222] Walker (2012).

[223] Ahern et al. (2015).

[224] Ahern et al. (2015).

3.2. Towards a typology of Service leavers

From the literature reviewed, it is clear that current approaches to categorising Service leavers are inadequate, as these approaches often lack granularity in their discussion of Service leavers' circumstances of leave and their demographic backgrounds. As outlined in Recommendation 5 (see Section 6.2.2), developing a standardised approach to collecting data on Service leavers could help address this evidence gap and, as a result, contribute to improved policy and service provision for Service leavers.

Drawing on the literature reviewed, the study team has developed an indicative data capture template – an initial step towards a more developed typology. A key objective of this type of template is to encourage researchers, service providers and the MOD to capture a wider range of variables in data collection and analysis. Presented in Figure 3.4, such a template could be used in a number of ways:[225] when applied in research, for example, it could be used as a tool to generate more comparable and generalisable data relating to Service leavers. Furthermore, it could be used as a primary research instrument to identify challenges associated with different Service leaver types. This would, in turn, equip policy leads with the data to develop more targeted support for specific Service leaver types tailored to the transition challenges they face.

Our indicative template is structured in relation to Service leavers' discharge type given that – of the three 'cluster types' examined in Section 3.1 – the cluster focusing on 'discharge type' is the most commonly used in the literature reviewed and broadly corresponds to UK government documentation. The outline template is presented in Figure 3.4 overleaf and would allow users to select drop-down options relating both to a Service leavers' discharge type and circumstances of departure (represented in the red cells) and their demographic background (represented in the blue cells).[226]

When using a template of this kind, we suggest that policy professionals, military charity representatives and academic experts not only capture Service leavers' discharge type but also consider a wider set of contextual factors that may affect individual transition experiences. According to the literature reviewed, demographic factors such as age, gender, deployment experience or socio-economic background can shape transition experiences and associated challenges (see Section 3.1.2). This was validated by Expert Workshop discussions, which highlighted the importance of capturing information in this way to better understand individual transition experiences. Workshop participants also noted that understanding this demographic information can be helpful when designing targeted transition support programmes tailored to specific groups that may have lower resilience and be more vulnerable upon leaving the military.

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[225] Please note that some cells in Figures 3.5 and 3.6 are intentionally left blank.

[226] The study team had previously considered incorporating a binary distinction into the template focusing on 'voluntary vs involuntary' leave. However, this approach was discarded given the inherent subjectivity of these categories and the fact that, to the study team's knowledge, Service leaver data is not currently captured in this way. This consideration similarly applies to distinctions focusing on 'positive vs negative' leave, 'planned vs unplanned' leave and 'access to support vs no/limited access to support': alternative approaches that were discussed at the Expert Workshop but ultimately dismissed due to their subjective nature.

Figure 3.4 Service leavers data capture template

Leaver type ▾	Circumstances of leave ▾	Service ▾	Gender ▾	Age ▾	Years of service ▾	Commissioned/ non-commissioned ▾	Combat deployment experience ▾	Marital status ▾	Sexual orientation ▾	Children or dependants ▾	Ethnic origin ▾	Highest educational qualification ▾	Comments (e.g. relevant trade skills) ▾
Early Service Leaver	Disciplinary discharge	Army	Female	<18	<4.5	Commissioned	No	Divorced	Heterosexual or straight	No	Asian British	None	[free text]
Normal discharge	Completion of engagement	RAF	Male	18-24	4.5-8	Non-commissioned	Yes	Married, including civil partnerships	Homosexual	Yes	Black/ Caribbean British	GCSE (or equivalent)	
Medical discharge	Elective discharge	Royal Marines	Other	25-29	9-15			Partnership	Other		Foreign and Commonweatlh	A-Level (or equivalent)	
	Family reasons	Royal Navy		30-39	>15			Separated			Mixed	Bachelor's degree (or equivalent)	
	Redundancy			40-49				Single			White	Master's degree (or equivalent)	
	Submission of notice to leave			50-59				Widowed			Other	Doctor of Philosophy (or equivalent)	
	Other			>59								Vocational training	
												Other	

Source: RAND Europe analysis of ONS (2014); ONS (2012); UK Parliament (2018); UK MOD (2017)

The demographic factors presented in Figure 3.4 are not intended to be exhaustive: the factors selected are those that appear most commonly in the literature reviewed. Additional categories could be added, for example in relation to an individual's socio-economic background given that, as stated in a report by the Centre for Social Justice (2014), pre-Service factors may increase transition challenges for some Service leavers. Socio-economic information could focus on the type of school(s) attended; whether the Service leaver or their families had received income support; a Service leaver's level of educational attainment; and their parents' income and educational attainment. Other factors which could be explored include previous or ongoing mental health issues, level of access to support services, Regular/Reserve status, rank, and specific deployment experience (combat role, peacekeeping role, location).

The template presented above could provide the foundation for further primary research intended to identify challenges that are more typically associated with different Service leaver 'types'. Ultimately, this knowledge could serve to underpin more targeted support for specific Service leaver types tailored to the transition challenges identified.

Box 3.1 presents a summary overview of the main findings presented in this chapter.

Box 3.1: Key findings on types of Service leavers

- **MOD documentation offers a classification of Service leavers by 'discharge type'**, focusing on three categories: **Early Service Leavers** (ESLs), **'normal discharge'** Service leavers, and **'medical discharge'** Service leavers.
- While categorising Service leavers by discharge type is the most common type of grouping in the literature, overall **there is no commonly adopted typology of Service leavers** in the literature reviewed.
- **Current approaches to categorising Service leavers lack granularity** in their discussion of Service leavers' circumstances of leave and their demographic backgrounds.
- As outlined in one of our recommendations (see Section 6.2.2), **developing a standardised approach to collecting data on Service leavers could help address this evidence gap** and, as a result, contribute to improved policy and service provision for Service leavers.

The next chapter outlines a number of the challenges affecting some Service leavers when undergoing transition, as well as exploring the role of resilience and wider support on their transition experiences.

4. Transition challenges for Service leavers

The following sections outline findings with regard to RQ3(a): '*What are the challenges faced by different Service leaver types?*' As with Chapter 3, these findings are based primarily on the 'Service leaver types and challenges review'.[227] The chapter first outlines a number of common challenges that can affect Service leavers undergoing a transition (Section 4.1). Section 4.2 then identifies challenges faced by different Service leaver types, as they may experience transition in a range of ways. Finally, the role of resilience and wider support in helping Service leavers overcome these challenges are outlined in Section 4.3.

4.1. General challenges affecting Service leavers

The majority of Service leavers integrate into civilian life with the ability to overcome the challenges they face.[228] However, a number of Service leavers undergoing transition may face more significant challenges upon their departure from the military. The literature reviewed highlights challenges either in general terms, or in relation to a specific type of Service leaver.[229] Some of the 'general' challenges listed overlap with the challenges faced by specific types of Service leavers. It should, however, be noted that it is unclear whether some of these issues are due to pre-Service factors or are unrelated post-Service factors. Another aspect to note is that often a Service leaver may face multiple challenges in combination.[230]

There are a number of common challenges that can affect Service leavers undergoing a transition. These general challenges can include (i) difficulty adapting to a civilian lifestyle, including re-establishing relationships; (ii) a lack of preparation or knowledge in relation to how to deal with aspects of civilian life, including managing one's own finances and employment; and (iii) having to deal with physical and/or mental health challenges. As discussed further in Section 4.1.1-4.1.3, Expert Workshop participants identified a range of challenges that Service leavers can face across all three of these categories.

4.1.1. Adapting to a civilian lifestyle

After leaving the military, Service leavers have to adapt to a civilian lifestyle. According to Brunger et al. (2013), dealing with changes of identity and self-perception is one of the challenges faced by Service

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[227] This is described in more detail in Section B.3 of Annex B, and is an REA of academic and grey literature that initially identified 57 sources of potential relevance, with 29 of these papers included in the final review. The 'resilience and transition review' also informs Section 4.3.2.

[228] Expert Workshop discussions; Binks & Cambridge (2017); Godier et al. (2017).

[229] Godier et al. (2017); Buckman et al. (2012).

[230] Brunger et al. (2013).

leavers, and Service leavers need to '*reconcile their military lives with their civilian lives.*'[231] Ahern et al. (2015) describe this as an '*experience of alienation*' when returning to civilian life which also includes, according to the study, a loss of purpose and a disconnection with elements of their civilian life, such as their friends and family. Walker (2012) notes that one of the roots of these challenges is that in some cases leavers can seem '*ill-prepared for civilian life and are often interacting with identity constructions of negligible civilian value.*'[232] In another study, Binks and Cambridge (2017) indicate that Service leavers may find it difficult to adapt to '*a life that is not as regimented as that in the military.*'[233]

Bergman et al. (2014) find that Service leavers may suffer from a reverse culture shock upon re-entering civilian life, with younger Service leavers the most affected.[234] Several sources note that leaving the military can create a sense of loss among Service leavers.[235] This can include loss of a community,[236] a social support network,[237] identity,[238] and an overall lifestyle.[239] The challenge that individuals can face relate not only to dealing with this loss, but also to having to rebuild these networks.

The US Office of Veterans Affairs (n.d.) also mentions that '*reconnecting with family and re-establishing a role in the family*' can be a challenge for Service leavers.[240] Black and Papile (2010) agree with this view, stating that family discord and difficult relationships with friends can present challenges for Service leavers.[241] While both of these sources relate to the US and Canadian military contexts, family issues, including family breakup, is also mentioned in UK literature.[242]

Reflecting the focus of the literature, Expert Workshop participants noted the following challenges that relate to adapting to a civilian lifestyle:

- Loss of military identity and sense of belonging
- 'Reverse culture shock' (referred to by one participant as 'adjustment shock')
- Strains on family and peer relationships
- Difficulties translating military skills for the civilian context.

4.1.2. Practical transition challenges

Another challenge relates to the more practical aspects of transition, in areas about which Service leavers may have limited knowledge. The US Office of Veterans Affairs (n.d.) lists a number of other practical challenges faced by various Service leavers. These include:

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[231] Brunger et al. (2013).

[232] Walker (2012).

[233] Binks & Cambridge (2017); Black & Papile (2010).

[234] Bergman et al. (2014).

[235] NAO (2007); Brunger et al. (2013); Herman & Yarwood (2014).

[236] Herman & Yarwood (2014).

[237] NAO (2007).

[238] Brunger et al. (2013).

[239] Herman & Yarwood (2014).

[240] US Veterans Affairs (n.d.).

[241] Black & Papile (2010).

[242] Brunger et al. (2013); Sondergaard et al. (2016).

1. *'Preparing to enter the workforce*
2. *Returning to a job*
3. *Creating structure*
4. *Adjusting to providing basic necessities (e.g., food, clothing, housing)*
5. *Adjusting to a different pace of life and work*
6. *Establishing services*[243] (*e.g. doctor's appointments, insurance, paperwork*)'

Finding new accommodation[244] and employment are also highlighted as potential challenges for Service leavers.[245] For example, one study found that it can be difficult to effectively translate military skills to civilian settings, with another noting that civilian employers do not understand military experiences in some cases.[246] Issues with finances were mentioned,[247] with financial challenges faced by some Service leavers including bankruptcy and debt.[248] Homelessness and unemployment emerged from the literature as two challenges related to financial issues that are faced by some Service leavers.[249]

According to one paper reviewed, transition challenges can affect leavers in a variety of ways across different Services. For example, Herman and Yarwood's (2014) research shows that Army and RAF Service leavers may struggle more with transition, due to '*their more frequent postings to new bases, [and tending] to socialise and associate more strongly within their bases*' compared to Royal Navy Service leavers, who are more likely to own an off-base property and as a result be more integrated in civilian life.[250] However, it is important to note that transition challenges cannot be generalised either across all Service leavers or within a single Service, given the heterogeneity of these groups in terms of their personal characteristics and their pre-Service, Service-related and post-Service experiences.

Reflecting the focus of the literature, Expert Workshop participants noted that Service leavers can lack understanding of how to access transition support and often '*lack the time to prepare for transition effectively'*. Participants identified the following practical transition 'challenge areas':

- Employment
- Accommodation
- Finances
- Schooling
- Spousal employment.

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[243] US Veterans Affairs (n.d.).

[244] NAO (2007).

[245] NAO (2007); Kapur et al. (2009).

[246] Elliot et al. (2017).

[247] Finnegan (2016).

[248] Davies (2014).

[249] Finnegan (2016); Kapur et al. (2009); Brunger et al. (2013); Davies (2014).

[250] Herman & Yarwood (2014).

4.1.3. Physical and mental health challenges

Other issues mentioned in the literature that Service leavers may face, or to which they may be more vulnerable, include substance misuse or abuse (such as drugs or alcohol);[251] mental health issues or difficulties, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anger, anxiety, depression;[252] physical health issues, including traumatic brain injuries, hearing impairment;[253] and suicide.[254] Furthermore, having a physical injury due to military Service could be an additional challenge as this can create vulnerabilities and could be combined with other challenges, such as mental health issues.[255] Several studies have found a causal relationship between physical and mental health of military personnel, due to the distress caused by the physical condition.[256] In a similar way, Expert Workshop participants observed links between different challenges, and highlighted mental and physical health as challenges that can affect Service leavers.

4.2. Challenges affecting specific 'types' of Service leaver

The literature reviewed does not outline specific challenges in relation to all types of Service leavers described in Section 3.1. Some Service leaver categories are discussed more frequently than others on the grounds that these groups are known to have more issues when transitioning compared to others.[257] The main characteristic shared by these Service leavers is that they either leave the military at an early stage (e.g. before the end of their minimum term) or leave involuntarily (e.g. due to medical discharge or for disciplinary reasons). Overall, Expert Workshop participants noted that individual Service leaver experiences are unique – regardless of Service leaver 'type'. Nonetheless, as Sections 4.2.1-4.2.4 show, participants made a number of observations regarding challenges that can affect ESL, involuntarily discharged leavers, those who have combat experience, and particular demographic cohorts (e.g. younger Service leavers).

4.2.1. ESL

As mentioned in Section 3.1.1, a number of ESLs are found to be particularly susceptible to encountering challenges in transitioning to civilian life. A report by the NAO (2007) concludes that within military personnel, those with the shortest service length and those who are medically discharged tend to find transition the most difficult.[258] This finding is supported by Godier et al. (2017), who conclude that ESLs '*do not leave with the qualifications and skills that would help them in their transition to civilian life,*'[259] and

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[251] Brignone et al. (2017); Kapur et al. (2009); Ahern et al. (2015); Brunger et al. (2013); Oster et al. (2017); Fossey (2010); Beech et al. (2017).

[252] Brignone et al. (2017); Kapur et al. (2009); Oster et al. (2017); Murphy et al. (2017); Beech et al. (2017).

[253] Oster et al. (2017).

[254] Brunger et al. (2013).

[255] Shields et al. (2016).

[256] Shields et al. (2016); Brignone et al. (2017).

[257] Binks & Cambridge (2017); Bergman et al. (2014); Buckman et al. (2012).

[258] NAO (2007).

[259] Godier et al. (2017).

Binks and Cambridge (2017) who state that ESLs are '*a group which have the most difficult transition experiences, [and] the poorest mental health outcomes*.'[260]

However, most of the literature does not differentiate between the sub-types of ESLs (as outlined in Figure 3.1). This lack of granularity means there is no differentiation in the types of challenges dissimilar ESLs can face. This caveat should be kept in mind when considering the challenges outlined below.

The first challenge for ESLs, in the UK context, is that most are not eligible for the full resettlement benefits. JSP 534 (Issue 17, 2017) mentions that '*longer service is rewarded with entitlement to increased resettlement time*' and that ESLs are not entitled to Graduated Resettlement Time (GRT), GRT travel warrants, or to an Individual Resettlement Training Costs (IRTC) Grant, which serves '*to assist with the cost of resettlement training activities*.'[261] Overall, ESLs' lack of access to the full suite of resettlement support measures has been noted as being an issue in the literature reviewed, as the reduced support provision leaves ESLs '*less prepared to deal with issues related to daily civilian life*'.[262]

Bergman et al. (2014) explain that the reason why ESLs can face more challenges than other types of Service leavers may be due to the fact that '*their discharge comes before they have completed the process of cultural adjustment.*'[263] Bergman et al. (2014) use the U-shaped curve model (illustrated in Figure 4.1 below) to describe why ESLs may face more challenges: '*they are still in the negative phase of the first U-shaped curve on entry to service and they start their re-entry in the civilian world at a disadvantage.*'[264]

Figure 4.1 U-shaped curve of cultural adaptation
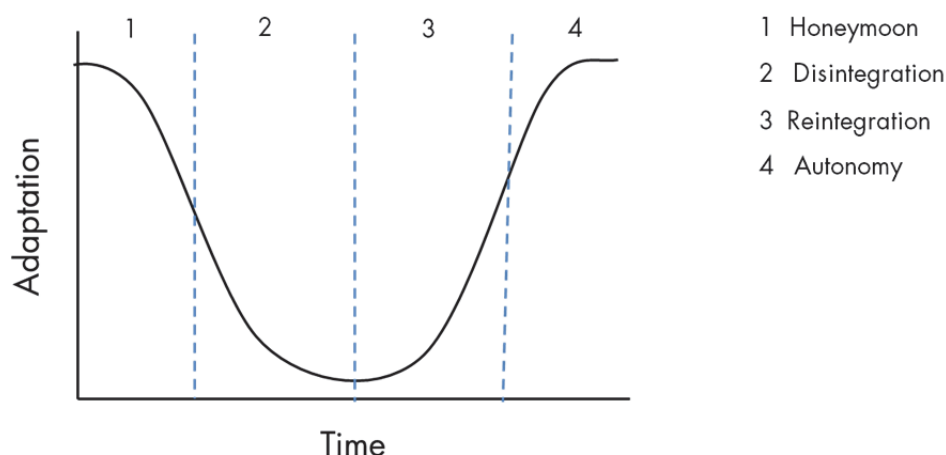
Source: Based on Bergman et al. (2014)

The literature and some Expert Workshop participants highlighted a number of challenges that more vulnerable types of ESLs can face. These include poor mental health,[265] a higher risk of offending,[266]

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[260] Binks & Cambridge (2017).

[261] JSP (2017).

[262] Trajectory (n.d.).

[263] Bergman et al. (2014).

[264] Bergman et al. (2014).

[265] Expert Workshop; Buckman et al. (2012); Giebel et al. (2014); Bergman et al. (2014); Binks & Cambridge (2017).

poorer employment outcomes (including unemployment),[267] substance abuse (e.g. alcohol abuse),[268] homelessness,[269] and suicidal tendencies.[270] However, it should be noted that other Expert Workshop participants challenge this finding: one participant stated that while leaving Service early is a minor risk factor, the nature or method of departure is likely to be a more significant risk factor.

Expert Workshop participants also highlighted challenges associated with *longer* length of Service. One participant suggested that individuals who have left the military more than ten years ago may face reintegration challenges given that the support landscape was less developed at their time of departure. It should be noted, however, that participants' views overall were mixed on the question of whether longer Service equates to greater difficulties in adjusting to civilian life.

4.2.2. Involuntary discharge

Leaving the military involuntarily – rather than by choice, on completion of their engagement or upon retirement – can present a number of challenges. According to the literature reviewed, Service leavers who are discharged involuntarily tend to face a wider range of challenges when undergoing transition.[271] Personnel who are asked to leave may feel that a civilian identity has been imposed on them, '*leading to resistance and feelings of misalignment.*'[272] Additionally, a study conducted in the United States by Brignone et al. (2017) finds that '*the premature nature of non-routine discharge[273] may leave veterans unprepared for the challenges associated with reintegration and more vulnerable to post-discharge mental health and substance use disorders.*'[274] These findings were supported by an Expert Workshop participant who stated that difficulties in adjusting are closely linked with whether or not an individual has chosen to leave the military.

Specific types of involuntary leavers highlighted by the literature include medically discharged Service leavers[275] and those leaving via military prison or the Military Correctional Training Centre (MCTC).[276] Service leavers medically discharged due to injuries sustained during operations or other physical disorders may see their career come to an end unexpectedly, which could lead to feelings of rejection.[277] Challenges mentioned in the literature in relation to medically discharged Service leavers include mental health issues

[266] Trajectory (n.d.).

[267] Godier et al. (2017); Trajectory (n.d.).

[268] Trajectory (n.d.).

[269] Expert Workshop; Trajectory (n.d.).

[270] Godier et al. (2017).

[271] Walker (2012); Godier et al. (2017).

[272] Herman & Yarwood (2014).

[273] Non-routine discharge is a US term equivalent to the 'other' category in the 'discharge type' cluster in Section 3.1.1. This includes: 'disability, failure to meet or maintain qualifications, early release for family or other obligations, and disciplinary infractions.' Source: Brignone et al. (2017).

[274] Brignone et al. (2017).

[275] NAO (2007).

[276] Godier et al. (2017); Fossey (2010).

[277] Finnegan (2016).

(e.g. anxiety and depression);[278] substance misuse;[279] debt;[280] lack of proper accommodation, including homelessness;[281] and suicide risk.[282] According to Morin (2011), being 'seriously injured' is also one of several factors that can make re-entry to civilian life more difficult.[283] Challenges that Service leavers leaving the MCTC reportedly face include debt, housing issues, mental health issues and alcohol dependency.[284]

4.2.3. Deployment and/or combat role

The literature reviewed highlights challenges that are specific to personnel who have been deployed on operations and/or who have had a combat role. One of the sources reviewed states that the '*exposure to traumatic events during deployment increased their chances of violent offending on return*'[285] denoting a particular vulnerability with this type of Service leaver. The literature on this topic is mostly focused on the US context, and reports challenges such as '*psychological, substance use, and physical health problems*'[286] as well as homelessness and premature mortality.[287] Black and Papile (2010) cite physical and psychological challenges,[288] while Oster et al. (2017) note '*an increased risk for PTSD and other mental health problems, hearing impairment/ tinnitus, pain, … and aggressive and violent behaviours*'.[289] In addition, Morin's (2011) research finds that having experienced a 'traumatic event' and having served in combat makes transition more challenging.[290] Similarly, one Expert Workshop participant also suggested that '*ex-Service personnel with previous combat experience can struggle more with transition*'.

4.2.4. Demographic factors

According to Expert Workshop participants and the literature reviewed, demographic factors such as age and gender can affect transition experiences for Service leavers. According to workshop participants, such factors can include family life, childhood adversity, lower socio-economic background and educational attainment. Two of the sources reviewed found that younger Service leavers tend to face challenges when transitioning to civilian life.[291] In a paper exploring the mental health of Service leavers, Fossey (2010) states that '*the risk of suicide in Army males aged under 24 years who had left the Armed Forces was approximately two to three times higher than the risk for the same age groups in the general and serving*

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[278] Godier et al. (2017); Giebel et al. (2014); Fossey (2010).

[279] Brignone et al. (2017); Fossey (2010).

[280] Fossey (2010).

[281] Fossey (2010).

[282] Brignone et al. (2017).

[283] Morin (2011).

[284] Fossey (2010).

[285] Trajectory (n.d.).

[286] Ahern et al. (2015).

[287] Ahern et al. (2015).

[288] Black & Papile (2010).

[289] Oster et al. (2017).

[290] Morin (2011).

[291] Bergman et al. (2014); Kapur et al. (2009).

populations'.[292] In a study analysing transition experiences and barriers to employment, Brunger et al. (2013) found that '*in contrast to many of the recent service leavers who were still seeking continuity between their military and civilian lifestyles, those who had been discharged the longest commented on how their mentality[293] appeared to adjust over time. For these individuals it indicated acceptance of what was evidently a long and very emotional transition.*'[294]

Oster et al. (2017) also found that a Service leaver's gender can affect their experience of transition, noting that '*female veterans have a higher risk of homelessness than male veterans but female veterans were reported to be at lower risk than male veterans for substance use/ misuse and hearing problems*'.[295] Another study by the Centre for Social Justice (2014) states that pre-Service factors can affect transition challenges and experiences. These can include coming from a broken home, having a deprived background, or having been in long-term unemployment prior to joining the military.[296] This study notes that '*more than a third of ESLs … have endured the highest levels of childhood adversity,*'[297] indicating that pre-Service disadvantages may impact total Service time.

4.3. Role of resilience and wider support

The sections below describe the role of resilience and wider support in equipping Service leavers to address the challenges described in Sections 4.1 and 4.2.

4.3.1. Resilience

The literature reviewed did not focus to a great extent on the role of resilience in helping Service leavers address transition challenges. As discussed further in Section 2.1.1, some of the sources reviewed provided an overview of resilience,[298] but did not discuss the role of resilience in helping Service leavers overcome transition challenges.

One study noted that so-called 'military resilience' could be '*counter-productive during periods of transition*' due to the type of coping mechanisms practised in the military such as '*coping by keeping emotions to themselves and not seeking help.*'[299] In other words, it suggested that what helps Armed Forces personnel when they are in the military may not be helpful in the civilian world. Binks and Cambridge (2017) note that a strong military identity – in which resilience plays a role – may make transition more difficult.[300]

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[292] Godier et al. (2017). However, use of this variable should also be treated with caution, as responses will differ depending on the amount of time that has passed since military personnel have left the Armed Forces. Source: Morin (2011).

[293] According to Brunger et al. (2013), this refers to individuals accepting both their military and their civilian identities.

[294] Brunger et al. (2013).

[295] Oster et al. (2017).

[296] Centre for Social Justice (2014).

[297] Centre for Social Justice (2014).

[298] For example Hourani et al. (2012).

[299] Davies (2014).

[300] Binks & Cambridge (2017).

Similarly, another source stated that having a '*strong internalised military identity*' was associated with a more difficult transition into civilian life compared to those with a less internalised military identity.[301] During the transition process, the '*strong social resilience collectively developed by military personnel*' is often no longer present as a basis for support.[302]

Hourani et al. (2012) outline a number of ways in which resilience could be built prior to departure from the military in order to equip Service leavers for transition. This includes: '*training in stress management … or the implementation of "transition buddies" or other relationships that provide support throughout the transition process to civilian life*'.[303] The use of 'transition buddies', or a supportive peer, to provide support during transition, is also mentioned by Ahern et al (2015).[304]

4.3.2. Wider support

The literature reviewed provides examples of how wider support can be used in order to facilitate transition and help Service leavers overcome challenges during this process.[305] One source recommends the creation of training programmes and services in order to strengthen social support networks and help Service leavers cope more effectively with challenges.[306] In addition to that, other support – currently provided in the UK through the resettlement programme (see Section 3.1) – includes practical and psychological preparations for discharge and encourages '*appropriate help-seeking behaviour once individuals have left the Armed Forces.*'[307] The resettlement programme provided by the MOD was acknowledged as being important in helping Service leavers, due to the broad-ranging type of support it offers – while noting the caveats mentioned in Section 3.1, relating to the differences in resettlement provisions available depending on the length of service.[308]

Other support mentioned in the literature reviewed includes helping Service leavers develop a set of 'civilian skills'. This can involve supporting Service leavers in conducting job searches or better understanding how to communicate in a civilian setting.[309] According to Black and Papile (2010), support should be targeted at areas that can improve transition experiences, with a focus on facilitating accessible mental health support, satisfying employment, and positive personal relationships.[310] Having a family and peer network 'supportive of recovery' was also highlighted as being helpful in overcoming transition challenges.[311]

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[301] Binks & Cambridge (2017).

[302] Bergman et al. (2014).

[303] Hourani et al. (2012).

[304] Ahern et al. (2015).

[305] It should be noted that it is beyond the scope of this study to provide detailed mapping of, or evaluate the effectiveness of, the programmes described here.

[306] Hourani et al. (2012).

[307] Kapur et al. (2009).

[308] Fossey (2010).

[309] Brunger et al. (2013); Shields et al. (2016).

[310] Black & Papile (2010).

[311] Albertson et al. (2015).

Table 4.1 provides a high-level summary of the types of programmes mentioned in the 'resilience and transition review' literature, indicating which of the programmes focus on building resilience. The transition programmes presented below have been administered in the UK, the United States, Australia and Canada.

Table 4.1: Examples of support programmes mentioned in the academic and grey literature[312]

Programme	Country focus	Description of the programme	Link to resilience?
At Ease[313]		Provides assistance to veterans, Service personnel and families following deployment; helps to identify and address symptoms of 'not coping'; offers a 24/7 helpline, provides advice, treatment options and resources.	
Career Transition Partnership[314]		Encompasses a number of veteran-focused programmes and initiatives (e.g. Armed Forces Covenant, MOD Joint Service Housing Advice Office).	
Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program[315]		Applied across the US Army; focuses on building resilience in serving personnel and in individuals assigned to Warrior Transition Units.[316]	✓
Families OverComing Under Stress (FOCUS)[317]		Aims to build resilience in the families of serving military personnel during the military-to-civilian transition.[318]	✓
Right Turn[319]		Provides tailored support (training and peer-support groups) to veterans experiencing substance misuse, mental health and social isolation issues. Operates on the assumption that the comradeship and mutual resilience underpinning military life can be re-directed	✓

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[312] A supplementary scan of Google and Google Scholar showed that at least five of the programmes presented in Table 4.1 have been evaluated (1. Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program: Lester et al., 2011a, Lester et al., 2011b, Harms et al., 2013; 2. FOCUS: Lester et al., 2016; 3. Right Turn: Albertson et al., 2017; 4. Transition Assistance Program: US Government Accountability Office, 2014, US Department of Labor Chief Evaluation Office (ongoing), Trutko et al., 2013; 5. Veterans Affairs Canada: Veterans Affairs Canada, 2016a-c).

[313] Berle & Steel (2015).

[314] Herman & Yarwood (2015).

[315] Lowe (2015).

[316] Department of the Army (2014).

[317] Ursano, Gabbay et al. (2014).

[318] FOCUS (n.d.).

[319] Albertson, Irving et al. (2015).

		to support recovery and desistance journeys.	
F.R.E.E. 4 Vets[320]		Life skills training programme that includes skills for managing relationship difficulties and setting objectives.	✓
Future for Heroes[321]		Provides free 4-day residential programmes that aim to develop skills, techniques and coping mechanisms for Service leavers and veterans in transition from the military.[322]	✓
Coming Home Project[323]		4-day retreat programmes that emphasise self-care and resilience practices to alleviate compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma and burnout, and provide a space to care for personnel, veterans and their families. Focuses on promoting wellbeing across the deployment cycle and provides support for successful reintegration into civilian life.	✓
Transition Assistance Program[324]		Provides information, tools, and training to ensure that Service leavers and their families are prepared for the next step in civilian life.	✓
Veterans Affairs Canada[325]		Rehabilitation programme that aims to help veterans and their families acquire professional help in order to handle medical, psychosocial and vocational issues interfering with the veteran's ability to transition successfully to civilian life.	✓

Source: RAND analysis (2017) of (Albertson, Irving et al. 2015; Berle & Steel 2015; Bobrow, Cook et al. 2013; Davies 2014; Elliott, Chargualaf et al. 2017; FOCUS n.d.; Herman & Yarwood 2015; Lowe 2015; Ray & Heaslip 2011; Ursano, Gabbay et al. 2014)

In addition to what has been covered in the literature, the March 2018 Armed Forces Covenant in the Community Conference[326] discussed policy initiatives and government-wide support being offered to Service leavers. This support includes:

- The **Armed Forces Covenant**, a pledge signed by UK Local Authorities as well as businesses, charitable, and public sector organisations, which aims to provide employment, housing and

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[320] Berle & Steel (2015).

[321] Davies (2014).

[322] Future for Heroes (n.d.).

[323] Bobrow, Cook et al. (2013); Coming Home Project (n.d).

[324] Elliott, Chargualaf et al. (2017).

[325] Ray & Heaslip (2011).

[326] Conference sponsored by the Armed Forces Covenant, and attended by RAND Europe on 22 March 2018.

financial assistance to ensure that members of the Armed Forces community are not hindered by their Service;

- The **Veterans Board**, a government initiative to ensure Armed Forces Covenant commitments are being delivered across all relevant government departments such as healthcare, employment and education;

- The **Veterans Employment Transition Support programme (VETS)**,[327] an initiative made up of various companies, the MOD, the Career Transition Partnership and Service charities to help Service leavers improve their employment outcomes by assigning mentors to Service leavers and undertaking transition activities such as CV workshops, work placements, internships, job application assistance, and in-employment support;

- The **Veterans' Gateway**, an online portal directing veterans to specific types of support depending on their issue; and

- The **Defence People Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy**, an initiative which aims to 'prevent, detect, and treat mental health and wellbeing issues' affecting veterans, serving personnel, their families and defence civilians.[328]

Further sources of support were discussed at the Expert Workshop:

- According to one workshop participant, **there are more than 2,000 charities** dedicated to the provision of transition support for Service leavers in the UK.

- A number of these charities provide support for the **wounded, injured and sick**, including (but not limited to):
  - Help for Heroes
  - Combat Stress
  - Walking with the Wounded
  - Big White Wall
  - Step into Health.

- Other organisations offer **employment, financial and accommodation** services including (but not limited to):
  - The Career Transition Partnership
  - Regular Forces Employment Association (RFEA)
  - Officers' Association
  - Joint Service Housing Advice Office (JSHAO)
  - Change Step.

- One workshop participant noted that the MOD is drafting a ***Transition Strategy*** for UK Service leavers, and is also in the process of developing a **'qualifications translation matrix'** designed to help civilian employers understand military skills. A similar matrix has already been developed by the New Zealand Defence Force and in the United States by the RAND Corporation.

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[327] See: Veterans Employment Transition Support (n.d.).

[328] UK Government (2017).

Expert Workshop participants also made a number of more qualitative observations. For example, participants found that the **support landscape for Service leavers in the UK is *'generally quite strong'*** *but* agreed that **it would benefit from greater coherence and reduced duplication of effort** across different organisations and interventions. Further observations focused on the **need for family support**: for example, one participant noted that while veterans are '*well supported overall*', families are harder to access which can have a consequent impact on the resilience of Service leavers and the success of their transition. A separate observation focused on the **need to identify and support potentially vulnerable individuals before transition**, noting that at present most support services focus on the point of departure. Finally, participants highlighted the **need for more positive messaging** by the MOD, military charities and other service providers '*to signpost what a successful transition can look like, as well as to remove the stigma associated with seeking help*'.

Box 4.1 presents a summary overview of the main findings presented in this chapter.

Box 4.1: Key findings on transition challenges affecting Service leavers

- The **majority of Service leavers integrate into civilian life with the ability to overcome the challenges they face**.
- However**, a number of Service leavers may face more significant challenges** in relation to: (i) **adapting to civilian life**, including re-establishing relationships; (ii) a lack of preparation in relation to how to **deal with practical aspects of civilian life** (e.g. **housing**, **employment**); and (iii) **physical and/or mental health** challenges.
- Research suggests that **those with the shortest service length tend to find transition the most difficult** and that **ESLs can be prone to poor mental health, a higher risk of offending, poorer employment outcomes, substance abuse, homelessness and suicidal tendencies**.
- **ESLs' lack of access to the full suite of UK resettlement support** is noted as a key challenge for this cohort during the transition process.
- **Involuntarily discharged individuals** and **personnel with a previous deployment and/or combat role** are also reported in the literature to be particularly vulnerable to transition challenges.
- **Demographic factors such as age and gender can affect transition experiences** for Service leavers – but there remain significant data gaps.
- Our 'Service leaver types and challenges' literature review validates the findings of our 'resilience and transition' review: the **literature does <u>not</u> discuss the role of resilience** in helping Service leavers address transition challenges.
- **Examples of wider support are provided and often focus on individual 'challenge areas'.**

While this chapter has identified a number of challenges affecting Service leavers – as well as some sources of corresponding support – the next chapter turns to a discussion of challenges affecting comparator groups in other sectors, and contexts that also undergo a form of 'transition', with a view to identifying applicable lessons for Service leavers.

5. Lessons from comparator groups

This chapter presents findings relating to RQ3(b): '*What are the challenges faced by comparator groups in other sectors and contexts?*' The following sections first provide an overview of the comparator groups under consideration (Section 5.1), before analysing challenges that are specific to each group and common across groups (Sections 5.2 and 5.3). Finally, the chapter draws implications from this analysis for the Service leaver context (Section 5.4).

The findings presented in the following sections are based on the 'comparator groups' literature review: an REA of academic and grey literature that initially identified 1,946 sources before shortlisting 23 sources for final review.[329]

5.1. Overview of comparator groups

An experience of military service is typically different from civilian life in a number of ways. This difference not only stems from the unique function of military personnel in training for and supporting armed combat, but also a range of other factors that are often characteristic of military life, including the motivations and age of joining, the length and intensity of military training, the strong culture and values embodied by a military, the degree of support structure provided by military institutions, the physical displacement of military personnel from friends and family, and other characteristics. When individuals leave the Armed Forces, they often face a number of challenges in readjusting to a new civilian life, including more practical challenges such as navigating the private sector rental market for the first time, finding suitable civilian employment, managing personal finances, as well as more intangible challenges such as a feeling of loss associated with a former military identity. The existence and complexity of these challenges is not only discussed in academic[330] and public policy literature[331], but is also recognised in the UK through the wide range of charitable organisations that provide support to former military personnel.[332]

Yet, despite the unique nature of military service, there are nonetheless a number of professions and types of experience in the civilian sector that share some of the characteristics of the military service and the military-to-civilian transition. These may include, for example, professional athletes who retire from

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[329] Please refer to Section B.3 of Annex B for more information regarding the literature identified though the 'comparator groups' review, and to Section A.3 of Annex A for explanation of how this review was conducted.

[330] See, for example, Beech et al. (2017); Godier et al. (2017).

[331] See, for example, Søndergaard et al. (2016).

[332] See UK MOD (2018, 36–41) for an overview of charities involved in veteran support in the UK.

careers that require strict discipline and high physical workloads, or the experiences of skilled migrants who leave their country of origin to find employment in a new and unfamiliar environment.

The first stage of the review sought to identify a number of *comparator groups* who experience transitions that are in some ways similar to the transitions experienced by Service leavers when leaving the military. In determining these comparator groups, the study team first identified some of the particular characteristics of military service that may translate into particular civilian domains, together with some of the particular characteristics of the military-to-civilian transition.

Beginning with the former, some of the typical characteristics of military service include:[333]

- The **structured environment** of the military, which includes characteristics such as routine and hierarchy by rank.
- The **supportive framework** that provides for the basic needs of individuals, including accommodation and food.
- The strong **sense of culture** and ethos that surrounds military service, and the development of a **sense of identity** attached to the Armed Forces.
- The proximity and close-knit nature of the friendships and professional networks that individuals may develop through their military experiences.
- The **detachment from more 'normal' civilian life**, not only with regards to the physical detachment of some military locations, but also often a distancing of relationships, including from friends and family.
- The **physical nature** of military service, which is relevant to varying degrees across different branches and roles of the Armed Forces.
- Experiences of **physical and/or mental trauma**, in particular when occurring in combat operations.
- **Experiences of loss**, in particular when individuals have lost fellow Service personnel in combat operations.
- The **young age** at which some people join the military.

The transition from military to civilian life may also be defined by a number of characteristics, including:

- **Voluntary and involuntary transition**, depending on the circumstances of transition;
- The need to find **new employment**.
- **Rehousing** in civilian accommodation.
- Possible **relocation** and the associated **distancing from established social and professional networks**.
- Removal of structured environment and renewed **independence of living**.
- The relatively **young age** at which some people transition out of the military.

In identifying the comparator groups to be considered in this research, the study team sought to identify groups of individuals within the civilian sector whose experiences *before* transition relate to some of the

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[333] These characteristics of military Service are unlikely to be experienced to the same degree across different Services and roles within the Armed Forces, and experiences of the military certainly differ between individuals.

characteristics of military experience, and whose experiences *during* transition relate to some of the experiences of the military-to-civilian transition. A number of possible comparator groups emerged through both the resilience and transition reviews, and through discussions during internal workshops with the RAND study team. Following further review by RAND researchers, the following eight groups were identified as comparators:

- **Bereaved individuals,** in particular those mourning the death of a close family member or friend.
- **Divorcees** and other individuals who experience the breakdown of a long-term relationship.
- **Skilled migrants** who leave a skilled profession in their home country, and move to a new country of residence.
- **Former prisoners** who return to wider society after a period of incarceration.
- **Individuals who experience involuntary job loss**, both through redundancy and dismissal.
- **Individuals who leave a career with a strong professional culture**, including both planned and unexpected (e.g. through injury) departures.
- **Foster care leavers** who leave the social care system and transition to independent living as adults.
- **University starters**, which focuses primarily on young people moving to university after finishing secondary education.

It is important to note that this is not a comprehensive list of groups of individuals who are comparable to Service leavers, but rather constitutes a list of some of the groups whose members may experience challenges that are similar to individuals who transition out of military service. Table 5.1 below provides the rationale for selection for each of these comparator groups, and identifies some of the limitations in the comparisons.

Table 5.1: Definitions and rationale for selection of comparator groups

Comparator group	Description of transition	Rationale for selection – in what way is this group similar to Service leavers?
Bereaved individuals	Bereavement is an experience of losing a close relation or friend through death, and corresponds to a transition from a status *with* to a status *without* this individual. This includes the transition from being a wife to a widow, from being a husband to widower, from being a parent to being childless (or with fewer children), and the experience of losing a friend.	Bereavement is not only closely associated with an **experience of loss**, but may also involve a renewed **independence of living** when someone loses a co-habiting or supportive partner, parent or child. Individuals may also face challenges in forming a new 'single' **identity** following the death. Bereavement is also an **involuntary transition.**
Divorcees	Divorce refers to the end of a marriage, and involves the transition from a close and often long-term relationship into renewed single and independent life, or the transition into a new relationship. This comparator group also includes individuals who leave a long-term relationship with some of the characteristics of a marriage, such as co-habitation, shared finances, and length of time together.	Divorce not only involves a **sense of loss** towards a relationship, but may also be accompanied by **renewed independence, physical relocation, reduced support networks, and a change in identity**. Divorce can be both **voluntary and involuntary**.
Skilled migrants	Skilled migrants transition from a familiar home environment, where they have developed recognised skills that would enable them to pursue a particular career, to a new country where these skills may not be recognised or valued to the same degree.	Skilled migration not only includes **physical** relocation and **distancing from existing support networks**, but may also involve the need to find **employment** in a new environment. Skilled migrants may also enter into a **new culture** in their destination country, and may experience a **change in identity** as a migrant or 'outsider' in this culture.
Former prisoners	Former prisoners transition from a period of incarceration into the freer world of wider society.	Prison is a **structured environment** where individuals may experience **supportive structures** and a **detachment from 'normal' life**. The release from prison often involves physical **relocation**, renewed **independence**, and the need to find **new housing** and **new employment.**

Individuals who experience involuntary job loss	Individuals who experience involuntary job loss transition unwillingly from a state of employment to a state of unemployment. This is often accompanied by a reduction in income – either short- or long-term – although this does depend on any redundancy package, and the ease with which new employment is obtained.	Redundancy and dismissal are both examples of **involuntary job loss** that typically require the individual to find **new employment.** The loss of employment may be accompanied by financial difficulties, challenges in re-entering the job market, and an uncertain sense of **self-identity**.
Individuals who leave a career with a strong professional culture	A strong professional culture refers to a work environment or approach to work that strongly influences an individual's self-perception and perception of their employment. This may include former professional athletes, former opera singers, former police officers, and former charity/NGO employees.	A loss of strong professional culture may be accompanied by difficulties in re-establishing a **sense of identity**, as well as difficulties in finding **new employment** to replace their former career. Certain professionals, such as professional athletes, may have experienced a **highly structured and supportive** work environment during their careers, and thus experience additional challenges associated with **independent living** and a **distancing from former social and professional networks** during their transition. A transition may be **voluntary or involuntary**.
Foster care leavers	Foster care leavers experience the transition from foster care to independent adult living. This typically occurs between the ages of 18 and 21.	Leaving foster care involves challenges of **relocation**, new **independence, detachment from support network**, and a need to find **employment**. Foster care children may experience turbulent and sometimes **traumatic experiences** both before and during foster care, which could have implications for their mental health during transition to independent life.
University starters	This group refers primarily to individuals who begin university within a couple of years of finishing school.	Starting university is often accompanied by physical **relocation**, with the majority of UK students, for example, electing to move into their own stable accommodation for the first time. This is accompanied by a **distancing from established support networks**, and challenges in fitting into a new environment and **culture**. University starters are usually young in age (late teens or early 20s), and thus the move to university also corresponds to **independent living** for the first time.

5.2. Challenges faced by comparator groups

The following section discusses some of the challenges of transition that are faced by the comparator groups: bereaved individuals, divorcees, skilled migrants, former prisoners, individuals who experience involuntary job loss, individuals who leave a career with a strong professional culture, foster care leavers and university starters. Each discussion is based on a literature review of the sources identified through the REA method. To help structure the analysis, the challenges are clustered into eight categories:

- **Mental and emotional challenges**, which include the emotional challenges experienced during transition, as well as more serious mental health conditions such as depression and PTSD. Substance abuse is categorised across both mental and physical health.
- **Physical health**, which includes health indicators such as blood pressure and risk of morbidity, and together with mental health also includes substance abuse, including drug and alcohol use.
- **Relationships with others**, which refers to both the challenges in maintaining existing relationships in the context of transition, and in forming new relationships with others.
- **Relocation,** which refers to the challenges associated with a physical change in location, such as moving between cities in the same country, or moving to a new country.
- **Rehousing**, which refers specifically to the challenge of finding stable and appropriate accommodation.
- **Change of identity**, which considers the challenges surrounding self-perception and self-definition.
- **Independent living**, which includes factors such as managing personal finances, and undertaking more administrative tasks such as registering for healthcare Services and ensuring household tasks are completed.
- **Challenges of employment**, which includes challenges in finding, maintaining, and transitioning between different jobs.

This categorisation is not intended to place strict definitions on the different types of categories, but rather to act as an approximate framework to help cluster the challenges experienced by comparator groups. As the discussion in this section will illustrate, the challenges faced by comparator groups are often interlinked and do not necessarily fit neatly into a single category such as 'physical health' or 'relocation'. Substance abuse, for example, is particularly difficult to categorise, as it is linked to both physical and mental health challenges, and is influenced by and can impact a number of other categories including relationships with others and the challenges of independent living.

The remainder of this section discusses in turn the challenges faced by the eight comparator groups, and a summary of these is provided in Table 5.10. These results are then used as the basis for the discussion in Section 5.3, which seeks to identify some of the common issues across multiple comparator groups.

5.2.1. Bereaved individuals

This section considers the challenges affecting individuals who have experienced the death of a close family member or friend. This transition period is often defined as a period of *bereavement*, which in this section is defined simply as the condition of having lost a close family member or friend such that it impacts an individual's life.

Challenges of bereavement

The experience of bereavement is linked to a range of challenges, including renewed independence, changes in relationships, and difficulties in re-establishing a self-identity. However, it is the **emotional and mental health challenges** resulting directly from the experience of loss that features most prominently in the literature reviewed. Sources typically refer to the experience of *grief* or the *grieving process*, although there is some ambiguity in the literature as to whether grief is itself an emotion, or instead refers to a collection of other psychological and physical experiences that combine together into a more holistic experience of grief. Jaaniste et al. (2017), for example, use grief as synonymous with distress,[334] and associate it closely with a collection of other psychological difficulties, including heightened anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and greater incidence of psychiatric hospitalisation.[335] In contrast, Trevino et al. (2017) consider a narrower definition of *Prolonged Grief Disorder*, which they characterised as 'an intense yearning for the deceased and related impairment that persists more than six months after the loss'.[336] The authors link *Prolonged Grief Disorder* to an increased risk of anxiety, depression, and reduced physical health indicators, but nonetheless appear to define it as a separate phenomenon.[337] The definition by Trevino et al. also highlights the different time periods that can be associated with the grieving process, which not only include the acute period of distress that is sometimes experienced following the death of a family member or friend, but can also refer to a more prolonged challenge that can persist for multiple months or years.

Grief is not the only emotion experienced during a period of bereavement: a range of other **emotional challenges** are often expressed in response to the loss of a close family or friend. In the case of bereavement after suicide, for example, Maple et al. (2014) identify a number of other emotions that characterise the transition period, including: a feeling of shock and horror[338]; a sense of guilt[339]; a feeling of helplessness[340]; a feeling of blame directed both inwards and outwards; [341] and a feeling of shame not only linked to a feeling of guilt surrounding the individual's death, but also linked to the perception of external *stigma* that may be attached to a suicide.[342] Although these emotions are discussed by Maple et al. (2014) in the specific context of bereavement following a death though suicide, many of them also feature in

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[334] Jaaniste et al (2017,1).

[335] Jaaniste et al. (2017, 4).

[336] Trevino et al. (2017, 2).

[337] Trevino et al. (2017, 2).

[338] Maple et al. (2014, 3).

[339] Maple et al. (2014, 3).

[340] Maple et al. (2014, 3).

[341] Maple et al. (2014, 3).

[342] Maple et a. (2014, 3).

discussion of other types of bereavement. Trevino et al. (2017), for example, find that approximately one-third of caregivers who look after terminally-ill cancer patients experience a sense of guilt up to six months after the death of their patient.[343] These caregivers also communicate a sense of hopelessness, and describe difficulties in imagining their own futures. [344]

A common theme across the literature is that these mental challenges do not exist in isolation, but are typically linked to and accompanied by a range of other challenges during the bereavement process. In particular, they are often correlated to reduced **physical health,** with Trevino et al. (2017) finding a correlation between those who communicate a negative or hopeless view of the world, and an increased likelihood of suffering from a poorer standard of physical health.[345] Jaaniste et al. (2017) also note detrimental physical outcomes that have been measured in response to bereavement, including higher rates of cardiovascular illness, high rates of cancer, and higher mortality rates due to both natural and un-natural causes.[346]

The emotional challenges of bereavement have also been linked to **challenges in relationships with others** and a **change of identity**. Beginning with the former, Jaaniste et al. (2017), for example, note that the death of a child can have a detrimental impact on marriage and social life,[347] and Trevino et al. (2017) find that the emotional difficulties experienced by bereaved caregivers can interfere with their existing personal relationships, and create additional challenges when connecting with others.[348] The discussions on bereavement also consider the difficulties that result from a **change in identity**, with the report by Wendon-Blixrud (2008) in particular focusing on the ways in which identity can change during the bereavement process. The study finds that, for elderly men experiencing the death of their partner, many of the emotional and practical difficulties that arise from bereavement stem from a disconnection between an individual's new environment and an attachment to their former identity as a married man.[349] Trevino et al. (2017) find that caregivers of terminally-ill cancer patients experience challenges in accepting both loss and change, and that individuals who are who are resistant to change and maintain a strong attachment to the deceased are more likely to 'struggle' during the bereavement process.[350]

Finally, a range of other challenges are mentioned in the literature, albeit to a lesser degree than those mentioned above. The bereavement process may, for example, have a detrimental impact on the finances of an individual, in particular when coping with the loss of a spouse or partner. As a result, bereaved individuals may experience greater pressures surrounding their employment, as well as more general

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[343] HRQoL is a 'multi-dimensional concept that includes domains related to physical, mental, emotional, and social functioning.' Source: ODPHP (2018).

[344] Trevino et al. (2017, 8).

[345] Trevino et al. (2017, 8).

[346] Jaaniste et al. (2017, 4).

[347] Jaaniste (2017, 4).

[348] Trevino et al. (2017, 7).

[349] Wendon-Blixrud (2017, 16).

[350] Trevino et al. (2017, 8).

challenges in returning to **independent living**.[351] Additional challenges may arise due to external procedures, such as the legal authorities' requirements to determine the cause of death.[352]

Summary of challenges

These challenges of transition are summarised in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2: Transition challenges that may affect bereaved individuals[353]

	Challenges experienced by bereaved individuals							
	Mental and emotional challenges	Physical health	Relationships with others	Relocation	Rehousing	Change of identity	Independent living	Employment
Bereaved individuals	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	To a degree	No

Key:		
	Yes	The challenge is frequently experienced by individuals in the comparator group, and constitutes one of the primary difficulties of transition.
	To a degree	The challenge is somewhat associated with the experience of the comparator group, but is not typically a primary difficulty of transition.
	No	The challenge is typically not experienced by the comparator group, and when it does exist it is typically easily overcome.

Comparison to Service leavers

The experience of bereavement centres on the theme of loss, with the literature exploring a range of challenges that stem from experience of grief, identity change, and difficulties in connecting with others. For a Service leaver, the experience of military-to-civilian transition is also linked the theme of loss, but in the context of a change in employment and way of life as opposed to the loss of a close friend or relative. Nonetheless, a Service leaver may experience some of the same challenges as those who experience bereavement, including difficulties in forming relationships with people who have not experienced military service, and challenges in re-establishing an identity outside the military context. Of course, bereavement may also be experienced by Service personnel who, for example, may have lost a close friend during combat operations. For Service leavers who fall into this category, the discussion of the challenges associated more broadly with bereavement may help to develop an understanding of their particular experiences.

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[351] Jaaniste et al. (2017, 4).

[352] Maple et al. (2014, 4).

[353] Please note that this table corresponds to the challenges that were identified in the sample of literature that was reviewed. As described in greater detail in Annex A, the sample of literature was selected in a way that sought to include articles with both a broad and specific focus, but there may be other articles that are not included in this review that discuss some or all of the categories identified as 'No' in this table. A more focused and in-depth review of the bereavement literature would be required in order to produce a table that reflects more accurately the academic and grey literature as a whole. A similar caveat is also applied to the remaining seven comparator groups and Tables 5.3-5.9.

5.2.2. Divorcees

This section considers the challenges experienced by individuals who separate from a spouse or long-term partner. This broadly includes individuals who separate from a marriage or civil partnership, as well as individuals who experience the breakup of a long-term relationship. This latter scenario in particular would typically include scenarios where a couple has experienced a significant degree of emotional investment and/or co-dependence before ending the relationship.

Challenges of divorce

In a similar manner to bereavement, the **mental and emotional challenges** associated with divorce feature strongly in the literature, with individuals experiencing a range of difficult emotions that result from the loss of a relationship and – in particular when children are involved - the consequences on family life. Unsurprisingly, divorce is associated with increased levels of stress for both partners,[354] and divorcees typically experience a range of negative emotions including grief, sadness, and anger.[355] Goldberg et al. (2015), for example, find that both heterosexual and homosexual women experienced feelings of sadness, guilt, disappointment, concern (in particular for the potential impact on children), shame (in particular regarding their new single status), and anxiety (in particular at the prospect of meeting a new partner) during the breakup of their relationships.[356] The process of divorce is also linked to higher rates of more serious psychological problems, such as depression[357] and drug abuse.[358] In the study conducted by Sakraide (2005), for example, characteristics of depression were found in over 50% of participants, with the rate of depression particularly high for women who did not want to separate from their partner.[359] Similar to the process of bereavement, the emotional challenges experienced during divorce are also linked to poorer **physical health**, including a greater risk of mortality. [360]

A range of other challenges are experienced by individuals while transitioning out of a relationship, including those associated with **relocation, rehousing** and **independent living.** The end of a relationship is often accompanied by a change in living arrangements, which often involves relocation to new accommodation and a renewed level of financial and practical independence. The review by Amato (2000) notes that this relocation is often challenging for participants, as it may involve a downsizing of accommodation and possible move to a poorer area of town in order to be able to afford accommodation as a single person.[361] Further complications also arise from the shared custody of a child, with some divorced couples experiencing significant difficulties when trying to agree living arrangements. This is particularly the case for arrangements where custody is not shared equally between the two parents, which may arise when there are significant financial, geographical, and/or legal differences between the ex-

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[354] McIntosh (2009, 3).

[355] Sakraide (2004, 80).

[356] Goldberg et al. (2015, 151).

[357] Amato (2000, 6).

[358] McIntosh (2009, 3).

[359] Sakraide (2004, 79).

[360] Amato (2000, 6).

[361] Amato (2000, 4).

partners.[362] Nonetheless, for some couples, the issue of custody can pose little challenge to the transition process,[363] although certain major holidays, such as Thanksgiving in the United States, were typically cited as a continued source of difficulty.[364]

Also related to challenges of relocation, a number of sources discuss the challenges associated with **independent living** that individuals experience after the end of a long-term relationship. In particular, individuals who separate from a relationship typically experience an increased level of financial stress,[365] with women more likely to experience financial hardship.[366] Goldberg et al. (2015), for example, found that financial difficulties were identified as a major challenge for just over half of the participants in their all-female study.[367] Heterosexual women in particular noted challenges in their financial situation and changes in their approach to finance, with individuals either refinancing their houses, returning to the labour market, starting new businesses, or increasing their hours from part-time to full-time.[368] A number of authors have linked these increased difficulties to the greater challenges that women face in **employment**. For example, women often experience greater difficulties in returning to employment after a divorce due to factors such as more disrupted work histories and the continued challenge of childcare as a single parent.[369]

A further source of difficulty associated with divorce stems from changes in **relationships with others**. This not only includes a loss of emotional support and continued conflict with a former partner, but also includes a reduction in an individual's social network due to a distancing of contact with in-laws and friends associated with the marriage.[370] The relationship with children is also often affected, both in the short and long term. In the short term, children may experience a period of less effective parenting due to the emotional strain of the breakup, as well as practical challenges that may result as parents readjust to new living arrangements and parenting roles.[371] In the longer term, children often experience high levels of distress during a divorce, and on average, are more likely to exhibit behavioural difficulties such as disobedient or aggressive behaviour, experience greater difficulties in forming relationships with family and peers, and are at greater risk of alcohol and drug substance abuse.[372]

Individuals experiencing divorce also face challenges associated with a **change in identity** as they adapt to a new lifestyle and self-image not tied to their former relationship.[373] Sakraide (2005) note that some individuals express feelings of sadness surrounding the loss of their identity as a couple,[374] and the study

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[362] Goldberg et al. (2015, 150).

[363] Goldberg et al. (2015, 150).

[364] Goldberg et al. (2015, 150).

[365] Amato (2000, 4).

[366] McIntosh (2009, 3).

[367] Goldberg et al. (2015, 151).

[368] Goldberg et al. (2015, 151).

[369] Amato (2000, 9).

[370] Amato (2000, 4).

[371] McIntosh (2009, 3).

[372] McIntosh (2009, 3).

[373] Amato (2000, 3).

[374] Goldberg et al. (2015, 151).

by Goldberg et al. (2015) finds that individuals who experience divorce sometimes describe difficulties in 'letting go' of an idea of how their marriage was 'supposed to be'. This is found to be particularly the case for heterosexual women, which the authors suggest may be linked to perceptions of marriage as being the 'norm', and associated perceptions of divorce being stigmatised and perceived by others as a 'failure'.[375]

It is, however, important to note that not all divorcees experience negative challenges associated with their separation. Positive experiences of divorce are also discussed in the literature, including a sense of relief in 'letting go' of feelings for an ex-partner, [376] and positive emotions associated with an increase in personal freedom, a feeling of increased potential to grow, more time to reconnect with friends, increased opportunity to recommit to former hobbies,[377] improved career opportunities, and the opportunity to enter into a new relationship with a new partner.[378]

Summary of challenges
These challenges of transition are summarised in Table 5.3 below:

Table 5.3: Transition challenges that may affect divorcees[379]

Challenges experienced by divorcees								
	Mental and emotional challenges	Physical health	Relationships with others	Relocation	Rehousing	Change of identity	Independent living	Employment
Bereaved individuals	Yes	To a degree	Yes	Yes	To a degree	Yes	Yes	To a degree

Key:		
	Yes	The challenge is frequently experienced by individuals in the comparator group, and constitutes one of the primary difficulties of transition.
	To a degree	The challenge is somewhat associated with the experience of the comparator group, but is not typically a primary difficulty of transition.
	No	The challenge is typically not experienced by the comparator group, and when it does exist it is typically easily overcome.

Comparison to Service leavers
As with bereavement, the experience of loss associated with the end of a long-term relationship may bear some resemblance to the end of a military career, but a closer comparison may be drawn between some of the other challenges that result from divorce, such as those associated with renewed independent living, changes in identity, and detachments from former social networks. The particular challenges faced by

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[375] Goldberg et al. (2015, 151).

[376] Sakraide (2004, 81).

[377] Goldberg et al. (2015, 152).

[378] Sakraide (2004, 81).

[379] As discussed in Annex A.3, it is important to note that this table reflects the challenges that were identified in the sample of literature reviewed as part of this section. A more focused and in-depth review of the literature in this area would be required in order to produce a table that reflects the literature as a whole more accurately.

women may warrant closer study, as challenges associated with financial stability and independent living may be compound by greater barriers to entry when attempting to re-join the labour market.

5.2.3. Skilled migrants

> Skilled migration focuses on the movement of skilled workers between countries. The term 'skilled' is loosely defined to include migrants who have a high degree of skills and/or work experience that would typically enable them to find appropriate employment in a skilled job sector in their home country. This may include (although is not limited to) individuals who have completed some form of higher education qualification, such as a university degree, or who have previous experience in skilled employment, such as lawyers, doctors, accountants, engineers, computer scientists and other skilled professions.

Challenges of skilled migration

Although migration is by definition an act of **relocation**, the discussion surrounding the challenges of migration does not focus on the challenge of relocation itself (such as difficulties in finding an accommodation), but instead focuses on the challenges that are encountered when someone leaves behind a former life in their home county, and attempts to re-establish a new life in an alien culture and environment. This process of moving and re-establishing oneself is often referred to as the *acculturation process*, and a significant volume of literature is dedicated to defining and explaining the complex set of challenges and experiences that migrants undergo during the process of acculturation.[380]

The acculturation process is typically accompanied by a range of **mental and emotional challenges**, including feelings of frustration, depression, anxiety, loneliness, and isolation.[381] Migrants often experience a lack of emotional connection with their host country, and a feeling of detachment and isolation from its residents.[382] This is often coupled with a feeling of disconnection from and loss of close friends and family, and a feeling of disappointment as initial high expectations of a new country are replaced by day-to-day realities.[383] Migrants often experience challenges in 'letting go' of a previous **identity** connected to a home country, and subsequently reforming an identity as a migrant and citizen in a new country.[384] A number of these challenges are linked to differences in language and culture in the new country of residence, the experience of which is often linked to culture shock. Even when migrants had previously visited their future country of residence before moving permanently, van Tonder (2013) finds that a sense of culture shock is still experienced by migrants, with participants finding that many of the more subtle cultural differences were only experienced after complete immersion in the new country.[385]

One of the key challenges for skilled migrants identified in the literature is the **challenge of employment**, with research suggesting that migrants on average find it more difficult to gain employment than local residents and, once in employment, are more likely to be in a job that is below their level of skill and

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[380] See Tonder (2013, 342).

[381] van Tonder (2013, 347).

[382] Fang & Goldner (2011, 96).

[383] Fang & Goldner (2011, 97).

[384] van Tonder (2013, 348).

[385] van Tonder (2013, 349).

experience.[386] There are, however, differences between countries. In Australia, for example, migrants on average are equally likely to find a job as local workers, but less likely to find a secure, 'good' job that 'appropriately reflects the immigrant's educational qualifications and their previous occupational rank'.[387] Similarly in Canada, immigrants are also able to find employment as quickly as local residents, but the jobs are less stable, meaning migrants are more at risk from unemployment.[388]

The problem of unemployment and underemployment is particularly acute for particular subsets of migrants in these countries. Again in Australia, migrants with an Asian background experience higher rates of unemployment both in their first year after arrival, and in subsequent years. This is compared to both English-speaking and non-English speaking migrants from a European background, and holds even when controlled for different levels of human capital. In Canada, particular difficulties have been observed for both female migrants and migrants from non-European backgrounds (South and Central Asia, Middle East, and southern and eastern European migrants), with skilled workers from these countries more likely to be streamed into lower-skilled and lower-paid jobs, typically in the services and manufacturing sectors [389]

Once in employment, migrants are also more likely to face difficulties in the workplace. In particular, migrants are more likely to suffer from counter-productive work behaviours from their colleagues, which includes acts of aggression, sabotage, bullying, mobbing, incivility, emotional abuse, and other behaviours that harm or intend to harm the employees.[390] In Australia, this is again particularly acute for workers from non-white ethnic backgrounds, with different studies finding that between 20-30% of non-white employees have experienced counterproductive work behaviours, compared to less than 10% of white employees.[391] Migrant workers have also been found to experience wage discrimination, and in both Canada and Australia on average earn less than non-migrant workers, even when controlling for education and work experience.[392]

The aforementioned challenges in entering and maintaining employment not only lead to tangible difficulties such as reduced wealth, but are also linked to a range of **mental and emotional challenges,** and challenges of **physical health**. For example, Fang and Goldner (2011) note that unemployment and exclusion from the workplace are linked to higher rates of isolation and marginalisation, which in turn can lead to lower self-confidence and self-esteem.[393] Ramsey et al. (2008) find that counterproductive work behaviour towards migrants is linked to higher rates of work avoidance, lower confidence in the workplace, lower job satisfaction, and lower individual well-being.[394] A range of emotional issues are also linked to challenges of deskilling and discrimination, including shame, frustration, bitterness,

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[386] Ramsey et al. (2008, 111).

[387] Ramsey et al. (2008, 111).

[388] Ramsey et al. (2008, 111).

[389] Fang & Goldner (2011, 95).

[390] Ramsey et al. (2008, 112).

[391] Ramsey et al. (2008, 112-113).

[392] Fang & Goldner (2011, 95); Ramsey et al. (2008, 111).

[393] Fang & Goldner (2011, 94).

[394] Ramsey et al. (2008, 113).

unhappiness, loss of sleep, increased rates of mental health hospitalisation, psychological distress, anxiety and suicide attempts.[395] Fang and Goldner (2011) note that, although migrants typically arrive in Canada with better health indicators than native Canadians (known as the 'Health Immigrant Effect'), the long-term health of immigrants tends to decline over time.[396]

Summary of challenges

These challenges of transition are summarised in Table 5.4 below:

Table 5.4: Transition challenges that may affect skilled migrants[397]

Challenges experienced by skilled migrants								
	Mental and emotional challenges	Physical health	Relationships with others	Relocation	Rehousing	Change of identity	Independent living	Employment
Skilled migrants	Yes	To a degree	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Key:		
	Yes	The challenge is frequently experienced by individuals in the comparator group, and constitutes one of the primary difficulties of transition.
	To a degree	The challenge is somewhat associated with the experience of the comparator group, but is not typically a primary difficulty of transition.
	No	The challenge is typically not experienced by the comparator group, and when it does exist it is typically easily overcome.

Comparison to Service leavers

The challenge of migration appears to centre around two main themes: the acculturation process, and the challenge of finding stable and suitable employment. Both of these themes are also highly relevant to Service leavers, with a transition out of the military typically accompanied by a change in both culture and employment. When Service leavers complete their military careers, they move into a new 'civilian' culture that may contrast sharply with the military culture to which they are accustomed. Military personnel are also typically highly skilled, but in areas that do not necessarily have direct equivalents in the civilian sector. Service leavers may therefore also experience periods of unemployment and underemployment that are similar in nature to skilled migrants. Service leavers may also experience a number of other similar challenges, including a loss of social network, and associated feelings of isolation and alienation in their new environment.

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[395] Fang & Goldner (2011, 96).

[396] Fang & Goldner (2011, 96).

[397] As discussed in Annex A.3, it is important to note that this table reflects the challenges that were identified in the sample of literature reviewed as part of this section. A more focused and in-depth review of the literature in this area would be required in order to produce a table that reflects the literature as a whole more accurately.

5.2.4. Former prisoners

Prison release refers to individuals who transition out of the prison system and return to 'normal' life in the wider community. This applies to both short- and long-term custodial sentences, with periods in prison in the UK ranging from a small number of days to life sentences that last many decades, but may still include the option of prison release through parole.[398]

The challenges associated with prison release are particularly complex, as they not only relate to an individual's experiences both during and after incarceration, but also their experiences before prison, including both the circumstances surrounding their offence, and the impact of the crime itself. Moreover, ex-prisoners often experience the transition out of prison on multiple occasions. In the UK, around 44% of adults reoffend within one year of prison release, which increases to 59% for individuals who have served custodial sentences of less than 12 months.[399]

Challenges of prison release

Prisoners often struggle with **mental and emotional challenges** and **physical health** conditions both before and during their prison sentence, which in turn can contribute to a number of challenges when re-entering society. In the United States, for example, the prevalence of severe mental health disorders, chronic physical health problems and infectious diseases is considerably higher in the prison population in comparison to the general population. Previous studies have indicated that 30-40% of prisoners suffer from chronic mental or physical health conditions, with depression, asthma and high blood pressure particularly prevalent.[400] The problem of substance and alcohol abuse is particularly acute in the prison sector, with a large number of prisoners engaging in substance abuse before and during incarceration. In the United States, for example, the majority (around 83%) of inmates in prison have used drugs at some point in their life,[401] and in the UK, it is estimated that between one-third and one-half of new prison inmates are problem drug users, and between two-fifths and two-thirds of people sentenced have experienced hazardous levels of drinking.[402]

These **mental and physical health conditions** can be difficult to deal with on release from prison, and can make the transition into normal life more difficult for former inmates. Edgar et al. (2012), for example, identify both poor physical health and substance misuse as two factors that hinder ex-prisoners in finding and maintaining employment after their release from prison.[403] Substance and alcohol abuse have also been linked to increased difficulties in finding accommodation after leaving prison,[404] and in both the United States and the UK, substance abuse after release is linked to an increased rate of reoffending and re-incarceration.[405]

To further compound these challenges, the transition out of prison can itself exacerbate existing physical and mental health conditions, thus creating a feedback loop that creates further difficulties for individuals

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[398] Sentencing Council (2018).

[399] Bromley Briefings (2017).

[400] Baer et al. (2006, 6).

[401] Baer et al. (2006, 10-11).

[402] Edgar et al. (2012, 47).

[403] Edgar et al. (2012, 56).

[404] Edgar et al. (2012, 47).

[405] Edgar et al. (2012, 47) Baer et al. (2006, 10-11).

leaving prison. In Edgar et al. (2012), for example, one interviewee explains how the **challenge of rehousing** can increase the risk of relapse into drug use, with rehousing into hostels bringing together individuals with histories of reoffending and drug use into a single location.[406] Other interviewees discuss the difficulties linking prison release to lower self-esteem, lower self-confidence, depression, and a relapse into substance abuse in order to help 'kill the pain' associated with these challenges.[407] In the United States, the challenge of prison release is further compounded by difficulties in accessing adequate healthcare when released from prison, which stems from factors such as a lack of funding in community-based health care provision, and difficulties for ex-prisoners accessing health insurance.[408]

Rehousing into stable housing is seen as a particularly difficult challenge faced by prisoners as they re-enter society. Whilst some ex-prisoners are able to return to a family home, many do not have this option, and consequently are faced with the immediate challenge of having to find stable and secure accommodation on release from prison. This can be particularly challenging if the location of a prison is far from an individual's home town. Although the UK prison system operates as part of a national structure, the provision of resettlement support is often only available locally, meaning some ex-prisoners are unable to benefit from this support if they wish to **relocate** and return to their former place of residence.[409] Many ex-prisoners struggle to overcome these challenges, and consequently experience periods of homelessness and unstable housing. In the UK, for example, ex-prisoners are around three times more likely to be homeless than the general public.[410]

This difficulty in finding secure accommodation is linked to a number of challenges faced by ex-prisoners, including: poor personal finances on leaving prison, that prevent individuals from affording accommodation on the rental market; **challenges in living independently**, in particular in managing and being accountable for personal finances after leaving the controlled environment of prison; structural problems in the provision of housing support by government and local authorities, including administrative restrictions in accessing temporary accommodation for ex-prisoners, and a lack of advice and support for prisoners deemed to be at lower risk of homelessness; as well as additional difficulties that can arise from time spent in temporary accommodation after prison, such as increased access to drugs and higher risk of drug relapse while staying in hostels.[411]

The challenge of relocation and associated financial challenges of prison release are further exacerbated by **challenges of employment**, as former prisoners often face considerable difficulties in re-entering the labour market after leaving prison. Some of these challenges may stem from difficulties before prison entry, such as low educational attainment, low levels of work experience, limited vocational skills,[412] and a lack of formal qualifications.[413] However, a number of additional challenges can arise from time spent in

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[406] Edgar et al. (2012, 27).

[407] Edgar et al. (2012, 12-13).

[408] Baer et al. (2006, 6).

[409] Edgar et al. (2012, 25-26).

[410] Edgar et al. (2012, 22).

[411] Edgar et al. (2012, 23-27).

[412] Baer et al. (2006, 4).

[413] Edgar et al. (2012, 56).

prison, including disruption to work experience (particularly for long periods of incarceration), severance of professional and personal contacts while in prison, reluctance of employers to employ individuals with criminal convictions,[414] a lack of stable accommodation or a permanent address required in job applications, and the impact of poor physical and/or mental health that reduce an individual's ability to access and carry out particular forms of employment.[415]

Former prisoners may also face a number of **challenges with relationships with others**, in particular when returning to and reconnecting with family and friends.[416] These challenges can stem from the social stigma associated with a prisoner's original crime, their detachment from family and friends while in prison, and the continued challenges faced by an ex-prisoner when released.[417] A period of incarceration is necessarily accompanied by a physical detachment and absence of a prisoner from their family and social network, which in turn can have a disrupting influence on spousal relationships, parent-child relationships, and the prisoner's relationship with their wider social network.[418] Depending on the role of the prisoner in their family structure, their incarceration can also lead to additional difficulties for other family members, including increased financial instability and higher levels of household debt. These difficulties may continue after a prisoner's release, which adds additional stress to the sustainment of a family.[419] Additional challenges may arise after the release of the prisoner, in particular if the individual returns to previous habits of criminal activity and/or substance abuse.[420] This can be exacerbated if the ex-prisoner re-engages with former friends and acquaintances who continue to engage in and encourage this type of behaviour.[421]

However, in spite of these difficulties, it is important to note that families can play a significant positive role in supporting a prisoner's re-entry into society.[422] Families often assist in a number of ways, including the provision of short- or long-term accommodation, assistance in re-engaging with the community, improved access to employment, and help in avoiding a return to substance abuse.[423] The relationships between ex-prisoners and their children has been identified as a particularly important factor that discourages and reduces re-offending, and motivates ex-prisoners to take a proactive approach to their transition out of prison.[424]

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[414] Baer et al. (2006, 4).

[415] Edgar et al. (2012, 56).

[416] Baer et al. (2006, 12-13).

[417] Edgar et al. (2012, 38).

[418] Baer et al. (2006, 12).

[419] Edgar et al. (2012, 37).

[420] Naser & Vishner (2006, 26-27).

[421] Edgar et al. (2012, 48).

[422] Edgar et al. (2012, 37).

[423] Edgar et al. (2012, 38).

[424] Edgar et al. (2012, 40).

Summary of challenges

These challenges of transition are summarised in Table 5.5 below:

Table 5.5: Transition challenges that may affect former prisoners[425]

Challenges experienced by former prisoners							
	Mental and emotional challenges	Physical health	Relationships with others	Relocation	Rehousing	Change of identity	Independent living	Employment
Former prisoners	Yes	Yes	Yes	To a degree	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Key:		
	Yes	The challenge is frequently experienced by individuals in the comparator group, and constitutes one of the primary difficulties of transition.
	To a degree	The challenge is somewhat associated with the experience of the comparator group, but is not typically a primary difficulty of transition.
	No	The challenge is typically not experienced by the comparator group, and when it does exist it is typically easily overcome.

Comparison to Service leavers

A number of challenges associated with prisoner release may also be faced by Service leavers, although the prior experiences of prisoners and particular challenges associated with (repeated) criminal activity may limit some of these comparisons. Nonetheless, the challenge of relocation seems particularly relevant to both ex-prisoners and Service leavers, with both communities experiencing difficulties in finding suitable accommodation during the transition period.[426] Similar to ex-prisoners, Service leavers may also face challenges in finding stable employment and managing personal finances on leaving the military, and they may experience difficulties in re-integrating into family life after prolonged periods of physical separation, particularly when deployed on operations.

5.2.5. Individuals who experience involuntary job loss

Involuntary job loss refers to individuals who are forced to leave their existing employment against their will. This may be due to being dismissed, redundancy, or other factors that prevent an individual from continuing their profession, such as injury or deterioration in personal health. This section focuses primarily on the first two aforementioned forms of involuntary job loss (dismissal and redundancy), with job loss through injury considered as part of the next comparator group (loss of strong professional culture).

Challenges of involuntary job loss

Involuntary job loss is inherently a **challenge of employment**, but one that brings with it a range of other personal and practical difficulties.

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[425] As discussed in Annex A.3, it is important to note that this table reflects the challenges that were identified in the sample of literature reviewed as part of this section. A more focused and in-depth review of the literature in this area would be required in order to produce a table that reflects the literature as a whole more accurately.

[426] For Service leavers, see for example Royal British Legion (n.d.).

In the immediate period after experiencing a loss of employment, individuals often report a range of **mental and emotional challenges** associated with the transition. These include feelings of powerlessness, shock, betrayal, shame, alienation,[427] grief, depression, and anger.[428] In particular, almost all participants in the study by Vickers & Parris (2007) described the experience of shock associated with their job loss, with the authors likening these descriptions to the early stages of a grief response.[429] The participants in the study experienced an especially acute sense of shock when their job loss was unexpected, but even in instances when the job loss was partly expected, the sense of shock of participants was still 'vivid and compelling'.[430] This was even the case for participants who had previously experienced involuntary job loss, with one participant describing the same sense of shock after his third experience of involuntary redundancy.[431]

As time passes, the acute emotions associated with the immediate period after job loss are often replaced by a range of longer-term **mental and emotional challenges** which vary considerably between individuals. Some describe a sense of despondency, detachment and lack of trust towards the job market, [432] and suffer from a reduced sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy;[433] others describe a sense of urgency and desire to find a job quickly in order to maintain continuity in their professional history; [434] while others perceive a swift return to work as an important factor to help restore a sense of **identity** and feeling of accomplishment.[435] Moreover, some individuals experience a sense of relief towards their redundancy, particularly if the conditions of their previous working environment were difficult or unpleasant. This is often accompanied by a sense of opportunity, and a desire to pursue an alternative career path.[436]

During the period of unemployment following involuntary job loss, individuals often describe a number of challenges associated with returning to stable **employment**. As Hallqvist & Hydén (2012) describe, this re-entry can be challenging even for people who feel more secure over their future prospects. Some participants in their study, for example, communicated specific aims and courses of action, such as educational courses they wished to follow, but then struggled to access these courses and finance their goals. Other participants communicated an approximate idea of their professional and educational direction, and then struggled with a lack of information that would enable them to make an informed decision.[437] Finally, a sub-group of participants communicated a much greater level of uncertainty and lack of direction for their future, and often struggled with understanding their own ambitions and deciding on an appropriate path to take.[438] During this period of transition between jobs, Hallqvist &

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[427] Vickers & Parris (2007, 1-7).

[428] Hallqvist & Hydén (2012, 12).

[429] Vickers & Parris (2007, 5).

[430] Vickers & Parris (2007, 5).

[431] Vickers & Parris (2007, 5).

[432] Ebberwein et al. (2004, 13).

[433] Vickers & Parris (2007, 8).

[434] Hallqvist & Hydén (2012, 13).

[435] Vickers & Parris (2007, 8).

[436] Hallqvist & Hydén (2012, 10-11).

[437] Hallqvist & Hydén (2012, 14).

[438] Hallqvist & Hydén (2012, 14).

Hydén (2012) observed how individuals often go 'back and forth' between options, including applying for jobs, starting new jobs, starting self-employed businesses, and sometimes undertaking several of these options in parallel.[439]

An expected consequence of this uncertainty and lack of stability is the challenge of **independent living**, and in particular a lack of stable financial resources. Unless a redundancy or severance package is sufficient to cover a period of unemployment, an unexpected job loss will inevitably reduce an individual's income while they re-adjust and find new sources of income. As Ebberwein et al. (2004) note, however, the amount of financial resources available to an individual can vary greatly, and can strongly influence their ability to successfully manage a period of unemployment. Sufficient financial savings, for example, can remove the need to take stopgap employment immediately after an involuntary job loss, and also serves as an enabling factor for pursuing further education or training. Individuals may experience a conflict between supporting their own needs and the needs of their family, and the desire to find an 'ideal' occupation that may lead to greater longer-term stability and job satisfaction.[440] The degree of personal wealth available to an individual has also been found to influence their perspective and emotions towards their job loss, including their self-assessment of career adaptability, and the level of anxiety they experience during a transition period.[441]

Finally, once an individual returns to stable **employment**, their experience of involuntary job loss often continues to affect their perception and feelings towards their new place of work. Vickers and Parris (2007), for example, find that participants typically report reduced enthusiasm and enjoyment in employment, and tend to worry excessively about the security of their job. A perceived need to work overtime in order to 'prove' their value is reported, and the authors note more generally that participants often allow their experience of redundancy to unduly affect decision-making and influence workplace behaviours.[442] Vickers and Parris (2007) also describe some of the difficulties that people can experience when individuals fail to find a job that is equivalent to their former professional career, which includes feelings of boredom, frustration, and lack of recognition of their skill level.[443]

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[439] Hallqvist & Hydén (2012, 23).

[440] Ebberwein et al. (2004, 12).

[441] Ebberwein et al. (2004, 11).

[442] Vickers & Parris (2007, 8-10).

[443] Vickers & Parris (2007, 9-10).

Summary of challenges

These challenges of transition are summarised in Table 5.6 below:

Table 5.6: Transition challenges that may affect individuals who experience involuntary job loss[444]

	Challenges experienced by individuals who experience involuntary job loss							
	Mental and emotional challenges	Physical health	Relationships with others	Relocation	Rehousing	Change of identity	Independent living	Employment
Individuals who experience involuntary job loss	Yes	No	No	No	No	To a degree	Yes	Yes

Key:	Yes	The challenge is frequently experienced by individuals in the comparator group, and constitutes one of the primary difficulties of transition.
	To a degree	The challenge is somewhat associated with the experience of the comparator group, but is not typically a primary difficulty of transition.
	No	The challenge is typically not experienced by the comparator group, and when it does exist it is typically easily overcome.

Comparison to Service leavers

The challenges of involuntary job loss have a number of similarities with the military-to-civilian transition, including the uncertainty and financial constraints associated with a period of unemployment, and a lack of satisfaction that may be encountered when starting a new job. In particular, the uncertainty around future direction, and challenges in knowing how best to access appropriate education and upskilling, may be particularly relevant for Service leavers, who are perhaps already disadvantaged in their understanding of the civilian job market in comparison to their civilian counterparts. This comparator group may also be particularly relevant to Service leavers who leave the Armed Forces involuntarily as they may also experience some of the same short- and long-term negative emotions described earlier in this section.

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[444] As discussed in Annex A.3, it is important to note that this table reflects the challenges that were identified in the sample of literature reviewed as part of this section. A more focused and in-depth review of the literature in this area would be required in order to produce a table that reflects the literature as a whole more accurately.

5.2.6. Individuals who leave a career with a strong professional culture

This comparator group focuses on individuals who leave a profession that has an associated strong professional culture. In contrast to the previous section, this transition may be either voluntary or involuntary, and either planned or unplanned. A strong professional culture may be characterised by a number of factors, including high levels of skill, time commitment (potentially from a young age), restrictions on other aspects of life (such as diet, health, physique), periodic detachment from family and friends in order to fulfil professional commitments, and the development of a strong 'in-group' mentality with other people who are involved in the same profession. The two professions considered below are professional athletes (specifically gymnasts) and professional opera singers, although there are likely to be many other professions that could be defined within this category.

Challenges of loss of strong professional culture

For individuals from a profession with a strong identity and culture, the **change of identity** is one of the most frequently experienced and difficult challenges associated with a transition into alternative employment. In all three sources of literature reviewed in this chapter, the authors discuss the ways in which individuals both identified and defined themselves through their profession during their former professional careers. In Oakland et al. (2012), for example, the authors note that all participants in the study used their profession of opera singer as a means of self-definition,[445] and similarly in Warriner & Lavalle (2008), almost all interviewees describe how gymnastics constituted an important source of self-definition and validation'.[446] In the case of professional sportsmen and sportswomen, Smith and McManus (2008) note that the formation and internalisation of this identity can be particularly strong, as athletes are required to commit to their sport at a young age such that it dominates other experiences and the typical characteristics of adolescent development.[447]

When an individual ends their career and moves out of a professional culture, they often experience a strong sense of identity loss, and encounter considerable difficulties in re-establishing a renewed sense of self-identity. In interviews by Warriner & Lavalle (2008), the authors identify this sense of loss and identity confusion in the majority (six out of seven) of interviewees, with participants describing how they found it difficult to define and understand their capabilities and interests after the end of their careers.[448] Several participants stated that they still 'felt like gymnasts' as opposed to 'people who did gymnastics'.[449] Similarly, a number of the former opera singers interviewed by Oakland et al. (2012) reported a feeling of conflict between the new definition of themselves as an *ex*-professional musician, and what they expected from themselves and their environment.[450]

This internal conflict and challenge of identity can impact other aspects of an individual's transition. In Oakland et al.'s study, for example, the authors found that a sense of pride in one's music career, together with a high value placed on perfection and meticulous detail, can make it difficult for former opera singers

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[445] Oakland et al. (2012, 142).

[446] Warriner & Lavalle (2008, 307).

[447] Smith & McManus (2008, 3).

[448] Warriner & Lavalle (2008, 307).

[449] Warriner & Lavalle (2008, 307).

[450] Oakland et al. (2012, 142).

to look for, find, and ultimately accept new **employment**.[451] Once in employment, participants often find their roles unfulfilling, since they lack the same physical, emotional and artistic outlet offered by their former careers.[452] The former opera singers also reported difficulties in 'fitting in' to their new environments and forming new professional **relationships**, even if they remained in the music industry. Interviewees often described feelings of alienation, isolation and disconnection from the people around them, together with a sense of betrayal and remoteness from the operatic world. [453]

These challenges of isolation and alienation are often experienced by former professional athletes as well, for whom these challenges are also linked to the additional challenge of **independent living**. During their professional careers, athletes typically live in tightly controlled and protected environments where their daily routines, decisions and behaviours are all controlled by coaches and support staff.[454] Many of their close friendships are based around their sporting careers, with the demands of their careers often requiring athletes to be physically detached from family and non-sporting peers.[455] On leaving professional careers and **relocating** back into 'normal' life, many athletes feel both isolated and unsupported. In the absence of a structured environment and shared activity, friendships developed during professional careers often seem to disappear,[456] and as they move into a new environment, former athletes may be exposed to a range of new social pressures that they did not experience during their careers, including risk-taking and experimental behaviour such as drug use.[457]

Warriner & Lavalle (2008) highlight the particular **physical challenges** faced by rhythmic gymnasts in controlling both their diet and physical appearances. During their professional careers, rhythmic gymnasts are required to strictly control their diet and appearance, but following their retirement, these pressures are suddenly removed, which typically leads to physical changes in both weight and appearance. For some athletes, this change is extremely stressful, as their former sense of identity was not only linked to their gymnastic career, but also their physique and physical appearance as a gymnast. For one athlete interviewed in the study, the psychological challenges surrounding diet and appearance were so severe that it resulted in a two year battle with bulimia.[458]

Unexpectedly, these challenges of identity, employment, independent living and physical appearance experienced by former athletes and opera singers are typically accompanied by a range of **mental and emotional challenges.** Feelings of anger, guilt and betrayal[459] are typically accompanied by feelings of sadness, emptiness, hopelessness, and lack of purpose and direction in life.[460] Athletes who experience unexpected career transitions – due, for example, to career-ending injuries – are considered to be

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[451] Oakland et al. (2012, 141).

[452] Oakland et al. (2012, 141).

[453] Oakland et al. (2012, 140-142).

[454] Smith & McManus (2008, 45).

[455] Warriner & Lavalle (2008, 308).

[456] Warriner & Lavalle (2008, 308).

[457] Smith & McManus (2008, 2).

[458] Warriner & Lavalle (2008, 308).

[459] Oakland et al. (2012, 139).

[460] Warriner & Lavalle (2008, 307, 309).

particularly susceptible to psychological challenges, including lower self-esteem and self-respect, lower self-control, greater feelings of anger, anxiety and depression, and a greater risk of substance abuse. Deselection from a professional sport is considered to be a particularly difficult transition due to the impact on an individual's self-esteem.[461]

Nonetheless, it is important to note that experiences of transition are variable, with some experiencing positive transitions that require little or no tailored support.[462] Moreover, the experiences of individuals varies with time, with Warriner & Lavalle noting that it usually takes between two months to two years for former gymnasts to feel comfortable with the transition from their professional gymnastic careers.[463] Oakland et al. also acknowledge the potential role that time plays in the transition process, but identify the need for a longitudinal study in order to better understand this process.[464]

Summary of challenges

These challenges of transition are summarised in Table 5.7 below:

Table 5.7: Transition challenges that may affect individuals leaving a strong professional culture[465]

	Mental and emotional challenges	Physical health	Relationships with others	Relocation	Rehousing	Change of identity	Independent living	Employment
Challenges experienced by individuals leaving a strong professional culture								
Individuals who leave a career with a strong professional culture	Yes	Yes	To a degree	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Key:	Yes	The challenge is frequently experienced by individuals in the comparator group, and constitutes one of the primary difficulties of transition.
	To a degree	The challenge is somewhat associated with the experience of the comparator group, but is not typically a primary difficulty of transition.
	No	The challenge is typically not experienced by the comparator group, and when it does exist it is typically easily overcome.

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[461] Smith & McManus (2008, 2).

[462] Warriner & Lavalle (2008, 301).

[463] Warriner & Lavalle (2008, 307).

[464] Oakland et al. (2012, 146).

[465] As discussed in Annex A.3, it is important to note that this table reflects the challenges that were identified in the sample of literature reviewed as part of this section. A more focused and in-depth review of the literature in this area would be required in order to produce a table that reflects the literature as a whole more accurately.

Comparison to Service leavers

Similar to involuntary job loss, a loss of professional culture is, in its most basic interpretation, a challenge of employment. However, in a similar format to other comparator groups in this report, it is not simply the change of employment that can be difficult for individuals transitioning out of careers with a strong professional culture, but rather it is the collection of interconnected challenges associated with a change in identity, change in physical demands, loss of structure, loss of direction, change in social networks, and other associated challenges. This may have a number of close similarities with Service leavers, who typically also face leaving a tightly controlled environment with a strong sense of identity and physical element to the profession. Service leavers may also move away from established support structures and social networks, and may experience similar difficulties when fitting in and feeling satisfied with new forms of employment.

5.2.7. Foster care leavers

Foster care is provided to children – typically under the age of 18 years – whose biological family are considered unable to provide appropriate care for their child. This can be for a number of reasons, including abuse or neglect, difficulty in managing a child's disability, parental illness or disability, acute family dysfunction, low family income, absent parenting, or socially unacceptable behaviour by the parents and other family members.[466] Foster care typically involves removing the child from the care of the biological family and providing alternative care on either a temporary, short- or long-term basis. Foster care can take a number of forms, including emergency placements in residential homes when a child is at high immediate risk, short-term placement with other relatives or friends, long-term or permanent placements into a new foster family, intensive or specialist foster care provided by trained professionals, and out-of-area placements that are applied when a child is at risk when near their biological family.[467]

This section focuses on children who leave long-term or permanent foster care, and transition into independent living, as opposed to returning to their biological family. In the UK, this typically occurs at the age of 18, although current policy ensures that support is provided until the age of 21.[468]

Challenges of leaving foster care

Leaving foster care can be a particularly challenging experience for young people. The transition not only includes a number of common challenges more widely associated with independent adult living at a young age, but also typically involves additional difficulties that stem from an individual's experiences both before and during foster care. Foster care children often experience particular challenges during their initial family lives with birth parents, including abuse, neglect, mistreatment, parental dysfunction, or the death of a close family member.[469] Although foster care removes a child from these risks, the care itself has a number of associated challenges, including distancing from family and friends, instability that results from movement between foster care locations, and disruption to their education due to movement between and difficulties within schools.[470]

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[466] Zayed & Harker (2015, 7).

[467] Baginsky et al. (2017, 44-55).

[468] UK Government (n.d.).

[469] Steffe & Barry (2012, 3).

[470] Stein (2008, 40-42).

In the United States, for example, children in foster care have on average a lower rate of completion of both high school diplomas and higher education courses, which has been linked to interrupted schooling, lower levels of support and encouragement, and a lack of resources to support continued higher education.[471] This lower educational attainment often leads to significant **challenges in employment** for foster care children, as individuals find it harder to compete for jobs and excel in the workplace. Studies have shown that foster care leavers have on average a lower level of skills and qualifications, in particular for specialised jobs, which creates a higher risk of both unemployment and underemployment.[472]

Inevitably, difficulties in employment are closely linked to financial stability, which in turn is associated with challenges of **independent living**. An individual leaving foster care must typically cope with leaving school, finding a new home (**rehousing**), moving into the world of work, and – in some instances – becoming a parent at a much younger age.[473] Periods of unemployment or low-paid/casual work may therefore be accompanied by periods of homelessness, and also create difficulties in maintaining personal and professional relationships.[474] Indeed, Steffe & Barry (2012) note that forming and maintaining **relationships** can be a particular challenge for individuals after foster care,[475] with foster care leavers reporting higher levels of loneliness and social isolation,[476] as well as higher rates of **mental and emotional challenges** such as depression.[477] These difficulties are not only experienced during the immediate transition out of foster care, but can remain with an individual long into adulthood.[478]

As is often the case with difficult transitions, the period after leaving foster care is often linked to an increased risk of **substance abuse**, with foster care leavers observed to be at greater risk of both alcohol and drug abuse. Rates have been observed to be particularly high during the first year after leaving foster care, and for individuals who leave foster care at an early age.[479] Yet, the relationship is not necessarily straightforward. Steffe & Barry (2012), for example, found that substance use was on average lower in the foster care population than in the general population, but the rate of substance abuse disorders (SUDs) was higher than the general population. The authors suggest that the overall reduced usage may be linked to a lack of purchasing power of foster care children to buy particular substances. The authors also find that that an increase in SUDs is linked to a number of factors, including a history of conduct disorders, sexual abuse, or alcohol or marijuana use.[480]

Finally, foster care children may find it more difficult to establish and consolidate a sense of **identity** in adulthood due to the pressures they face from sudden independent living. In contrast to children who may be supported by their family of birth beyond the age of 18 years old, foster care leavers often do not

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[471] Steffe & Barry (2012, 4).

[472] Steffe & Barry (2012, 4).

[473] Stein (2008, 39).

[474] Stein (2008, 40-42).

[475] Steffe & Barry (2012, 3).

[476] Steffe & Barry (2012, 3).

[477] Steffe & Barry (2012, 3).

[478] Steffe & Barry (2012, 3).

[479] Steffe & Barry (2012, 3).

[480] Steffe & Barry (2012, 4).

have an opportunity to experience a period of little responsibility when they are free to explore, reflect, take risks, and ultimately develop a positive sense of self that allows them to feel secure in their identity as an adult.[481]

Summary of challenges

These challenges of transition are summarised in Table 5.8 below:

Table 5.8: Transition challenges that may affect foster care leavers[482]

Challenges experienced by foster care leavers								
	Mental and emotional challenges	Physical health	Relationships with others	Relocation	Rehousing	Change of identity	Independent living	Employment
Foster care leavers	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	To a degree	Yes	Yes

Key:		
	Yes	The challenge is frequently experienced by individuals in the comparator group, and constitutes one of the primary difficulties of transition.
	To a degree	The challenge is somewhat associated with the experience of the comparator group, but is not typically a primary difficulty of transition.
	No	The challenge is typically not experienced by the comparator group, and when it does exist it is typically easily overcome.

Comparison to Service leavers

There is some crossover in the challenges faced by foster care leavers and Service leavers. In particular, the challenges of independent living for foster care leavers may be particularly relevant for Service personnel who often both enter and leave the military at a relatively young age, and in particular those who enter without a strong background of educational qualifications. A comparison with foster care leavers may also be relevant to early service leavers (ESLs), who return to the civilian world at a young age without having had the opportunity to develop significant skills or financial stability while in the military. However, an experience of foster care is associated with a range of particular challenges that may be less relevant to service leavers, including disruptive education at a young age, experiences of abuse or neglect before entering foster care, and challenges in forming personal relationships that stem from difficult childhood experiences.

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[481] Stein (2008, 40).

[482] As discussed in Annex A.3, it is important to note that this table reflects the challenges that were identified in the sample of literature reviewed as part of this section. A more focused and in-depth review of the literature in this area would be required in order to produce a table that reflects the literature as a whole more accurately.

5.2.8. University starters

For many young people, the transition to university from secondary education is also their first experience of independent living away from their family home. Even for students who have attended boarding school during secondary education, the transition to university is accompanied by new levels of both freedom and responsibility, with less support and fewer restrictions provided by the educational establishment, and a greater responsibility to organise personal accommodation, finances, and academic study. In the UK, the majority of students in higher education live away from home during term-time in either university-provided residences, private sector halls, rented accommodation or their own properties, although just under one-fifth of students do remain in their parental or guardian's home.[483] This section focuses on the individuals who do move away from home when they start university, and identifies some of the challenges faced by this group as they make the transition to higher education.

Challenges of starting university

Denny (2015) considers six types of challenges that students face when attending university for the first time: increased personal responsibility, social and personal challenges, non-academic logistical challenges, academic challenges, institutional challenges, and challenges associated with communication and feedback from the university. In the survey conducted as part of the study, the most commonly perceived challenges were those associated with **independent living**, and in particular the challenges of self-motivation, self-directed learning, less-defined academic requirements, managing one's own time, and experiencing financial challenges. Participants also noted particularly strong challenges in their social and personal lives, in particular in trying to maintain a good work-life balance. Fewer participants recorded challenges associated with their academic experience, institutional challenges, and challenges associated with feedback from the university.[484]

The international students who participated in the study by McGarvey et al. (2015) reported a more varied set of challenges associated with **relocation** and **independent living**. On the one hand, the students reported few problems in adjusting to the practicalities of living away from home, with participants citing supportive factors such as previous experience of living away from home, and – in some instances – having the support of family visiting or even living nearby. However, the majority of the students also self-reported experiences of homesickness and loneliness at some point during their university studies, and in particular on occasions such as their initial arrival, periods of illness, exam periods, and at regular meal times.[485] Students also reported general difficulties in managing their time, in particular highlighting the challenge of balancing studying, a social life and independent living all at the same time.[486]

Some of these challenges associated with **relationships with others** appeared particularly important for the participants in the study by McGarvey et al. (2015). Participants not only discuss the difficulties in leaving behind friends, family, and an existing support network, but also note the difficulties they faced in forming friendships in their new location. For international students, friendships were most often formed with other international students due to the common bond over their transition experiences.[487] Students

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[483] HESA (n.d.).

[484] Denny (2015, 28-30).

[485] McGarvey et al. (2015, 5).

[486] McGarvey et al. (2015, 5).

[487] McGarvey et al. (2015, 5).

also described difficulties resulting from more subtle cultural differences, such as a different understanding of personal space, differences in understanding physical contact, and differences in dress code.[488] Based on their survey results, international students experienced higher levels of social alienation while at university when compared to students studying in the same country in which they grew up.[489]

The experiences of students are extremely varied, and despite some of the difficulties faced in transitioning to university, many of the participants reported positive feelings towards the transition into and through student life.[490] McGarvey et al. (2015) note that the more acute emotions associated with the transition typically subsided over time,[491] although this length of time can vary considerably from a few days to a few weeks, months, or even years.[492]

Denny (2015) also discusses some of the various challenges faced by different demographics groups of students when they transition to university. The study, for example, sampled students between the ages of 18 and 28, and found that older students reported greater difficulties associated with the transition to university. This is perhaps counterintuitive, but their analysis linked this observation to factors such as difficulties re-joining the academic system after spending time in employment, financial difficulties in returning to a life without a salary, increased anxiety and reluctance in accessing support, increased difficulties in fitting into and socialising with a (predominantly younger) class of students, and difficulties in meeting and forming a social network with other older students.[493] Other demographic differences were explored, with male participants, for example, reporting fewer challenges in transition, although it is not clear whether this was due to actual experiences, or a lower propensity to report experiences of challenges.[494] Academic performance was not found to correlate with difficulty in transition, with academically strong students appearing to struggle just as much as academically weaker students.[495] Students from urban backgrounds tended to report fewer challenges than rural students which, anecdotally, were linked to difficulties of rural students in fitting into a new environment and finding other people with a shared background and experiences with whom to socialise.[496] People with longer commutes reported greater challenges which, also anecdotally, were linked to greater challenges in engaging with social activities and in managing an already extensive timetable.[497] There was also some variability observed between different universities and different subjects.[498]

Summary of challenges

These challenges of transition are summarised in Table 5.9 below:

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[488] McGarvey et al. (2015, 5-6).

[489] McGarvey et al. (2015, 9-11).

[490] McGarvey et al. (2015).

[491] McGarvey et al. (2015, 5).

[492] Denny (2015, 34).

[493] Denny (2015, 30).

[494] Denny (2015, 31).

[495] Denny (2015, 31).

[496] Denny (2015, 31).

[497] Denny (2015, 31).

[498] Denny (2015, 33).

Table 5.9: Transition challenges that may affect university starters[499]

	Challenges experienced by university starters							
	Mental and emotional challenges	Physical health	Relationships with others	Relocation	Rehousing	Change of identity	Independent living	Employment
University starters	To a degree	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No

Key:		
	Yes	The challenge is frequently experienced by individuals in the comparator group, and constitutes one of the primary difficulties of transition.
	To a degree	The challenge is somewhat associated with the experience of the comparator group, but is not typically a primary difficulty of transition.
	No	The challenge is typically not experienced by the comparator group, and when it does exist it is typically easily overcome.

Comparison to Service leavers

As with youths leaving foster care, there are some similarities between the experiences of young people attending university for the first time and those of Service leavers, although the comparison should be made with caution. In particular, the age of university students may lend this group to a comparison with ESLs, in particular regarding the challenge of living independently at a young age. Moreover, a study of the challenges in transitioning to higher education may be relevant for Service leavers who choose to pursue this route, although the different backgrounds and experiences of Service personnel would need to be factored into the analysis.

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[499] As discussed in Annex A.3, it is important to note that this table reflects the challenges that were identified in the sample of literature reviewed as part of this section. A more focused and in-depth review of the literature in this area would be required in order to produce a table that reflects the literature as a whole more accurately.

5.3. Summary of challenges across comparator groups

Table 5.10 summarises the challenges faced by different comparator groups.

Table 5.10: Transition challenges affecting comparator groups[500]

	Challenges experienced by comparator group							
	Mental and emotional challenges	Physical health	Relationships with others	Relocation	Rehousing	Change of identity	Independent living	Employment
Bereaved individuals	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	To a degree	No
Divorcees	Yes	To a degree	Yes	Yes	To a degree	Yes	Yes	To a degree
Skilled migrants	Yes	To a degree	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Former prisoners	Yes	Yes	Yes	To a degree	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Individuals who experience involuntary job loss	Yes	No	No	No	No	To a degree	Yes	Yes
Individuals who leave a career with a strong professional culture	Yes	Yes	To a degree	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Foster care leavers	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	To a degree	Yes	Yes
University starters	To a degree	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No

Key		
	Yes	The challenge is frequently experienced by individuals in the comparator group, and constitutes one of the primary difficulties of transition.
	To a degree	The challenge is somewhat associated with the experience of the comparator group, but is not typically a primary difficulty of transition.
	No	The challenge is typically not experienced by the comparator group, and when it does exist it is typically easily overcome.

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[500] As described throughout this section, it is important to note that this table reflects the challenges that were identified in the sample of literature reviewed. Although attempts were made to select studies that were both broad and specific, further studies could be identified that would add to the information contained in this table.

The discussion in Section 5.2 presents some of the challenges faced by different comparator groups who experience transitions that are similar – at least in some regards – to the transitions of Service leavers. As one Expert Workshop participant noted, although the context of each comparator group is different, there are a number of common themes that emerge across multiple (and sometimes all) comparator groups. This section identifies some of these common themes, in particular focusing on the challenges faced by comparator groups, but also considering more broadly the role of resilience and external interventions in influencing the outcomes of transition.

Comparator groups face a wide range of similar challenges, although the distribution of challenges differs between groups

Each **comparator group experiences a wide range of challenges** when undergoing their particular transition. In other words, no comparator group faces one particular challenge in isolation, such as *only* a challenge of employment, or *only* a challenge of identity. Instead, the experiences of comparator groups are always associated with multiple challenges, such as a challenge of employment *and* a challenge of identity.

As Table 5.10 above illustrates, **most challenges are relevant to most comparator groups**, albeit in different ways and to different degrees. Challenges associated with mental health, for example, are common across all comparator groups, but feature particularly strongly in the literature on bereavement and divorce, and less so in the literature on the experiences of young people starting university. Similarly, challenges associated with independent living are identified across all comparator groups, but feature particularly strongly in the literature on leaving foster care and leaving a strong professional culture, and less so in the literature on bereavement and skilled migration. Therefore, although most challenges are common across most comparator groups, **some challenges are particularly relevant to certain comparator groups**.

Moreover, the **distribution of challenges differs between comparator groups**. Some comparator groups face a large number of difficult challenges, whereas for other groups the main emphasis is on one or two particular challenges. A loss of strong professional culture, for example, is associated closely with a number of acute challenges, including challenges of physical health, a change of identity, independent living, and a change in employment. In contrast, the literature on both bereavement and divorce focuses more heavily on one particular aspect – the challenges associated with mental health – with other challenges mentioned, but to a lesser degree

Of course, comparisons of this nature should be considered with caution, in particular given some of the methodological limitations identified in Annex A. The small number of studies consulted for each comparator group may, for example, fail to capture the full range of challenges that are emphasised across the literature as a whole. In particular, the focus on one or two challenges for certain comparator groups may be derived from a narrow focus on the selected literature, as opposed to accurately reflecting the range of real-world experiences of individuals. This risk was reduced by including studies that used different research methods, and in particular by including existing literature reviews that had already surveyed a wider range of academic and grey literature sources.

Challenges do not exist in isolation, but instead interact to increase the difficulty of transition

Each comparator group not only experiences a number of challenges, but these **challenges often interact and reinforce each other** to create a particularly difficult transition experience. In the case of prison release, for example, challenges associated with mental health and substance abuse are linked closely to challenges of both relocation and employment, with individuals who experience mental health difficulties or substance abuse often having more difficulty finding and maintaining suitable housing and a stable job.[501] These latter two challenges also interact, as it is typically more difficult to afford accommodation without a stable job, and also more difficult to access unemployment benefits and submit successful job applications without a permanent residential address. This in turn can increase the mental strain on individuals recently released from prison, thus creating a feedback loop that can compound the challenges of transition.

A similar complexity is also experienced by individuals who leave a strong professional culture. Former professional gymnasts, for example, often struggled with the change in identity associated with their transition, which in turn contributed to higher levels of anxiety and depression. For some athletes this was further compounded by the physical changes experienced at the end of their career, with some individuals struggling to cope with a gain in personal weight that resulted from a reduced training load. This change in physique was associated with a change in identity, as the identity of some athletes was derived – at least in part – by the physique that they maintained throughout their professional career.

This analysis points towards a **complex picture of the challenges faced by each comparator group**. It suggests that the challenges of transition should not be considered in isolation, as this would overlook the ways in which these challenges interact and compound to make the experience of transition even more difficult. A simplistic view of these interactions may also lead to less effective interventions that fail to take a holistic view of transition, and instead focus on particular challenges in an isolated and disconnected manner.[502]

Individuals within comparator groups experience different challenges

The analysis thus far in this section has considered the challenges faced in general by different comparator groups, but it important to note that **individuals within each comparator group experience different combinations and severities of transition challenges**. Some people within a particular comparator group experience a great range of challenges that persist over many years, whereas others appear to face relatively few challenges that last only a couple of days or weeks. Indeed, in each comparator group, there are individuals who communicate relatively positive experiences of transition, as opposed to the more negative challenges that are the focus of this chapter. In the case of divorce, for example, although some individuals experience great sadness from the loss of their relationship, others experience a renewed sense of freedom and purpose to pursue aspects of their lives that were stifled during their former relationships.

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[501] Edgar (2012, 21, 56).

[502] In the case of former gymnasts, for example, this criticism is applied to support mechanisms that focus almost exclusively on professional and academic qualifications associated with career transition, and does not adequately cover other aspects of transition such as coping mechanisms for physical and mental challenges, and ways of managing social integration when returning to a more 'normal' day-to-day life. Smith & McManus (2008, 2-3).

Similarly, many young people who attend university report largely positive experiences, and assign value to the experience of overcoming some of the challenges associated with moving away from home for the first time.

The literature investigates the role of different factors in supporting a successful transition, often with reference to resilience

A number of studies discuss some the **reasons that cause these different experiences**, as well as the reasons why **some people are more successful in overcoming transition challenges than others**. This appears to be an active area of research across all comparator groups, and ties in closely to the discussion of resilience presented in Chapter 2. According to one Expert Workshop participant,

> *the extent to which any group is able to meet their respective challenges depends on their own levels of resilience. Resilience is an important factor that connects all comparator groups with Service leavers.*

In the case of bereavement, for example, the study by Jaaniste et al. (2017) identifies four factors that may influence the success of a transition: loss stressors, intra-personal factors, inter-personal factors, and appraisal/coping factors. Loss stressors are defined as the particular circumstances of bereavement that may make a transition more difficult, such as whether or not the death was expected, or whether an individual had the opportunity to say goodbye; intra-personal factors are defined as stable factors intrinsic to an individual, such as personality, age, and history of mental and physical health; inter-personal factors are defined as stable factors external to the individual, such as social and family support, socio-economic status, and the wider family environment; and appraisal/coping factors are defined as the cognitive processes in an individual that are modifiable, and include both risk factors such as *rumination*[503] and *resilience mechanisms* such as positive emotions, meaning-making, psychological flexibility, and the ability to cope pro-actively.[504] The authors present these factors in a suggested model of parental bereavement illustrated below,[505] which is then used to frame the subsequent discussion on drivers of successful and difficult transitions.

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[503] In this context, 'rumination' refers to an individual's focused attention on their symptoms of distress and its possible causes and consequences, as opposed to its solutions.

[504] Jaaniste et al. (2017, 4).

[505] Jaaniste et al. (2017, 4).

Figure 5.1: A model of the factors influencing the transition of parental bereavement.
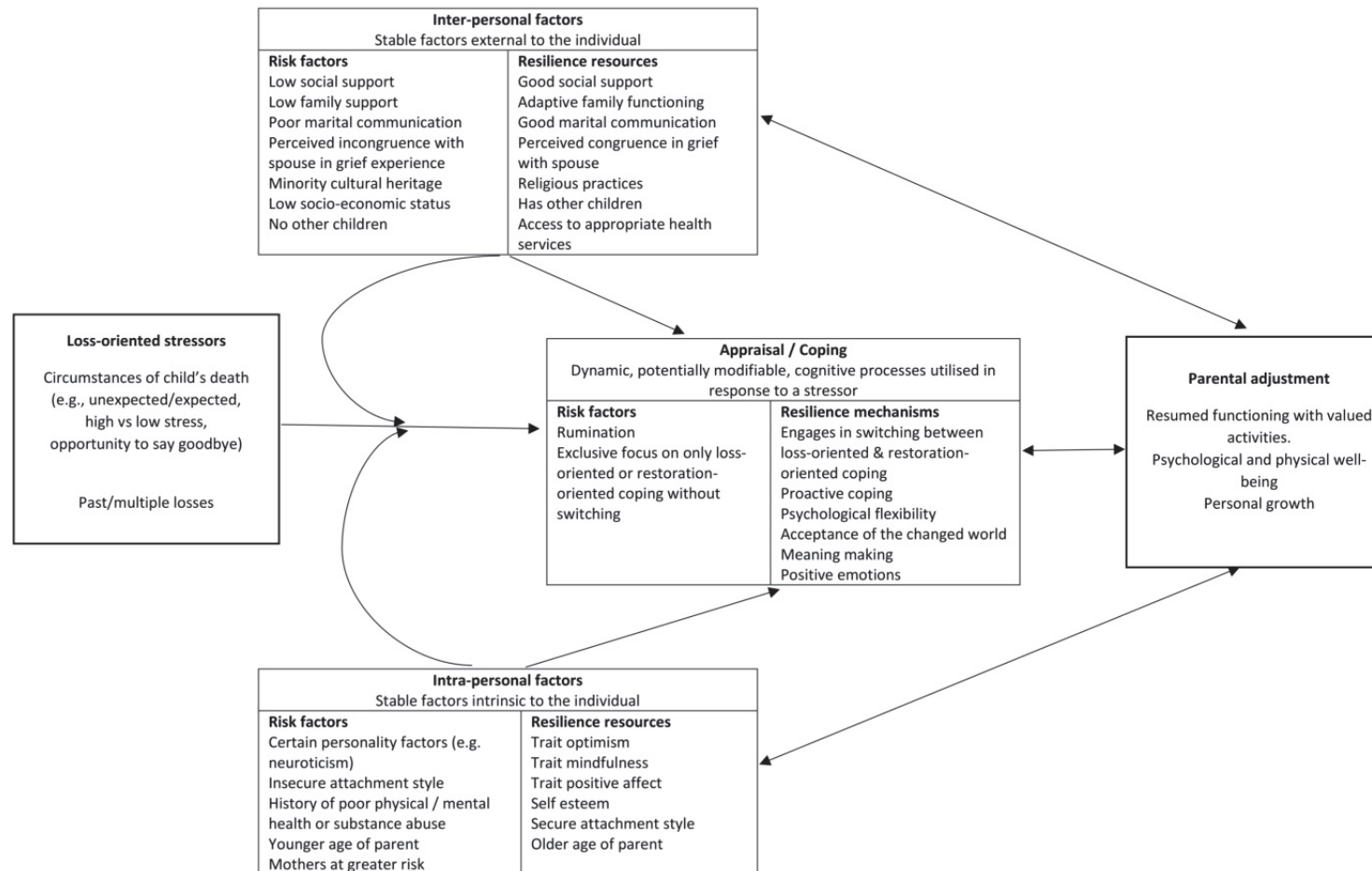
The study by Siriwardhana et al. (2010) also identifies factors that may influence the success of transition, although in this instance the model is applied to experiences of migration. Unlike the literature described in Section 5.2.3, this study does not focus exclusively on skilled migration but rather migration more generally, and was included in the literature selection as an example of an article with a strong focus on resilience. The authors develop a model for resilience that defines four stages of transition – origin, transit, destination, return – and identifies both individual (meso-level) and societal (macro-level) factors that may influence the success of a migrant's transition. This model includes factors in the country of origin such as the level of poverty, unemployment, education and history of violence experienced by the migrant; factors during transit such as the level of insecurity, poor health and access to legal protection; factors in the destination country such as the existence of supportive integration policies and interventions, the individual's language ability, and the level of discrimination that exists in government and the public sector; and finally, factors associated with a migrant's return to their home country, such as the effectiveness of repatriation and reintegration programmes if and when a migrant decides to return to their country of origin.[506] This model is used in the study as the framework for evaluating different migrant integration policy models in Europe, as well as suggesting ways of improving policies the better to support migrants throughout the entirety of their transition between countries.[507]

Other discussions and models of resilience were presented in the sources included in this literature review. These include the study by Stein (2008) which identifies three outcome of foster care transition – 'moving on' successfully from care, 'survivors' of care, and 'victims' of the care system – and links these outcomes to an individual's experiences before, during and after the foster care system;[508] the study by Smith and McManus (2008) which identifies a number of factors associated with more difficult transitions for professional athletes, including premature retirement, strong athletic identity, a lack of pre-retirement planning, and a lack of support mechanisms that maintain the development of the athlete's professional, academic and general life skills during the course of their career;[509] and the study by Baer et al. (2006) which identifies some of the factors that help enable the successful return of former prisoners into wider society, including support from case-managed re-entry services in finding and maintaining employment after release,[510] the provision of effective in-prison substance abuse treatment and after-prison community care for substance use,[511] and facilitating the strengthening of family connections during time in prison through providing time and support for letters, phone calls and family visits.[512]

Although the primary focus of this chapter is on challenges of transition, the examples and discussion presented above illustrate that the literature on comparator groups also touches topics such as resilience, 'successful' and 'unsuccessful' transitions, and the factors that facilitate these outcomes. At present, it is

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[506] Siriwardhana et al. (2010, 4).

[507] Siriwardhana et al. (2010, 20-21).

[508] Stein (2008, 40-42).

[509] Smith and McManus (2008, 2).

[510] Baer et al. (2006, 4).

[511] Baer et al. (2006, 11).

[512] Baer et al. (2006, 12).

not possible to quantify the extent or quality of this literature, but it does suggest that it **may provide a useful repository of information that both supports and builds upon the literature on Service leavers**.

5.4. Implications of comparator group analysis for Service leavers

Section 5.1 of this chapter outlines a rationale for investigating the challenges faced by groups which experience some form of transition that is similar to Service leavers (what we have called *comparator groups*). This final section re-focuses the discussion on Service leavers, and identifies some of the ways in which the analysis presented in this chapter may add to an understanding of military-to-civilian transition, and be used to inform further research on the challenges faced by comparator groups and Service leavers.

The common themes identified in Section 5.3 were derived from the analyses of all eight comparator groups, each of which was selected based on a degree of commonality with the experiences of Service leavers. Although an explicit link between these themes and the experiences of Service leavers was not explored, **their common basis would suggest that they may be applicable to the experiences of Service leavers during the military-to-civilian transition**, at least to some degree. This includes the following conclusions:

- A variety of challenges may be present during any transition period.
- These challenges do not exist in isolation, but rather interact to make the experience of transition more difficult.
- Different individuals experience different combinations and severities of challenges across different timeframes, and experience different rates of success in addressing these issues.
- An understanding of the role of resilience and external interventions may help to understand the reasons behind these differences in experiences and outcomes, and thus inform more effective policies.

Translating this to the military-to-civilian transition, it is likely that Service leavers will also experience a complex range of challenges that interact; that these challenges will vary between different Service personnel; and that both resilience and external interventions may be useful frameworks for trying to understand some of these variations.

The analysis provided at the end of each comparator group in Section 5.2 provides a more precise insight into the ways in which the **challenges faced by each comparator group compares with those affecting Service leavers**. In some areas, there is clear overlap between the context and challenges faced by a comparator group and those faced by Service leavers; in other, the experiences of transition differ between the comparator group and Service leavers. Skilled migrants, for example, may face a similar challenge to Service leavers in integrating into a new culture, in particular when integrating into the workplace where their skills may be underappreciated and not fully understood. They may also face similar challenges in accepting a new identity as a migrant, and in coping with the separation from established social and professional networks. Yet, there are also important differences between Service leavers and skilled migrants. A skilled migrant, for example, is less likely to have experienced the same type of structured environment and strong professional culture that is often typical of military service, and may therefore not

face the same challenges of relocation and independent living that may be experienced by Service leavers.[513]The experiences of ESLs may be similar in a number of ways to young university starters, in particular regarding the young age at which they are required to relocate and live independently, but there may be important differences in both the past and future experiences of these two groups, such as the level of prior academic attainment and the support structures provided by their immediate environment.

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[513] For this, see the discussions in Section 5.2.3.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter first presents an overview of the main study findings in order to address the first four research questions set out in Chapter 1 and presented in the box below. Building on these findings and addressing the final research question, it then outlines a series of recommendations for research, policy and service provision.[514]

- **RQ1**: What is the extent of the literature on resilience and transition from military to civilian life, and what are the main findings? (*See Sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.2*)
- **RQ2**: What Service leaver 'types' can be identified, and how can these groups be categorised? (*Sections 6.1.3 and 6.1.4*)
- **RQ3**: What are the challenges faced by (i) different Service leaver types and (ii) comparator groups in other sectors and contexts? (*Sections 6.1.5 and 6.1.6*)
- **RQ4**: How does our analysis of Service leaver challenges (RQ2-3) inform our wider understanding of resilience and transition (RQ1)? (*Section 6.1.7*)
- **RQ5**: What areas for future research, policy and service provision can be identified? (*Sections 6.2 and 6.3*)

6.1. Summary of key findings

6.1.1. There is a shortage of UK literature on resilience and transition into civilian life

The 'resilience and transition review' found that there are very few studies explicitly discussing the role of resilience in the transition from military to civilian life in the UK (seven studies).[515] While lessons can be identified from research conducted in other countries – namely, the United States, Canada and Australia – these tend to focus to a greater extent on transition to and from operational deployment, rather than from the Armed Forces into civilian life. Moreover, the extent to which these findings apply in the UK context is not clear. Further primary research would therefore be required to validate or challenge evidence from the 2016 FiMT Life Transitions consultation that supporting Service leaver resilience is important in ensuring successful transition experiences.

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[514] Findings are based on all data collection activities conducted over the course of the study, i.e. the resilience and transition review, the Service leaver types and challenges review, and the comparator groups review (see Research methods).

[515] Albertson et al (2015); Binks and Cambridge (2017); Bobrow et al (2012); Bowen and Martin (2011); Elliott et al (2016); Hourani et al (2012); McGarry et al (2015).

6.1.2. While there is no single definition of 'resilience' or 'transition', several common themes can be identified from the literature

This study has identified a patchwork of definitions in relation to 'resilience' and 'transition'. Nonetheless, the literature highlights a number of common themes: for example, 'resilience' is often associated with hardiness and strength, and can be conceptualised in terms of coping and adaptive skills, a positive attitude, and the ability to handle challenges. The academic and grey literature conceptualise resilience at the individual level, representing personal skills or traits that can be built upon, as well as at the group or community levels, where peer review and community support are seen as being important. Both the academic and grey literature conceptualise resilience not only as a characteristic that varies with context, time, age, gender and life circumstances, but also as a continuous process and as an outcome of transition. Given that 'resilience' encompasses a wide range of personal character traits, it becomes more challenging systematically to analyse factors that support transition.

In a similar way, the literature does not offer a common definition of 'transition': some sources do not use an expanded definition of the term, while others focus on related concepts such as 'reintegration' or 're-entry'. Research approaches also differ regarding where transition begins and ends: some papers apply simple, time-based parameters to the transition process (more often in the grey literature), while others conceptualise transition as an ongoing process that cannot be linked to a precise timeframe. Other, more thematically focused, 'multi-stage' approaches are also provided that focus on the phases of the transition journey for Service leavers. Despite these diverging approaches, the majority of sources reviewed share a common understanding that transition involves a process of adaptation from one culture or identity to another, and agree that there are multiple components of transition (including, for example, employment and mental health).

6.1.3. While there are several approaches to categorising Service leavers, these often lack granularity and there are areas for improvement

According to the literature reviewed, Service leavers are classified by 'type' in three ways: (i) by **discharge type**, which relates to the circumstances of discharge (e.g. ESLs, 'normal discharge' Service leavers and 'medically discharged' Service leavers); (ii) by **physical and mental characteristics**, which relate to the physical health, mental health and/or behavioural state of an individual upon departure (e.g. substance abuse, pregnancy); and (iii) by **Service leaver identity**, which relates to personal identity or self/belonging (e.g. having a strong military identity). The first of these categorisations ('discharge type') is the most commonly used in the literature reviewed, and is most closely aligned with the UK JSP's categorisation of Service leavers.

However, it is clear that these current approaches to categorising Service leavers often lack granularity in their discussion of Service leavers' circumstances of leave and their demographic backgrounds. This means that there is little discussion in the literature on how these factors can affect the 'success' of transition experiences, and that there is a consequent need for the inclusion of additional variables and characteristics when conducting research on Service leaver experiences of transition.

6.1.4. We present an indicative 'Service leavers data capture template' to support targeted research, policy and service provision

Given the lack of granular data in this area, we have developed an indicative template designed to enable the more detailed examination of transition experience among different Service leaver populations through the generation of more comparable and generalisable data (see Figure 6.1 below). Reflecting the focus of the literature reviewed and the Expert Workshop discussions, this focuses on 'discharge type' and demographic information when classifying Service leavers. As elaborated in Section 6.2, it is envisaged that a template of this kind could be used by researchers, service providers and the MOD in a number of ways. For example, it could be used as a research tool to generate more detailed comparable data relating to Service leavers in order to better understand groups experiencing 'low resilience' and greater vulnerability to transition challenges. This would, in turn, equip policy leads with the data to develop more targeted support for specific Service leaver types tailored to the transition challenges that they face.

Figure 6.1: Service leavers data capture template

Leaver type	Circumstances of leave	Service	Gender	Age	Years of service	Commissioned/ non-commissioned	Combat deployment experience	Marital status	Sexual orientation	Children or dependants	Ethnic origin	Highest educational qualification	Comments (e.g. relevant trade skills)
Early Service Leaver	Disciplinary discharge	Army	Female	<18	<4.5	Commissioned	No	Divorced	Heterosexual or straight	No	Asian British	None	[free text]
Normal discharge	Completion of engagement	RAF	Male	18-24	4.5-8	Non-commissioned	Yes	Married, including civil partnerships	Homosexual	Yes	Black/ Caribbean British	GCSE (or equivalent)	
Medical discharge	Elective discharge	Royal Marines	Other	25-29	9-15			Partnership	Other		Foreign and Commonweatlh	A-Level (or equivalent)	
	Family reasons	Royal Navy		30-39	>15			Separated			Mixed	Bachelor's degree (or equivalent)	
	Redundancy			40-49				Single			White	Master's degree (or equivalent)	
	Submission of notice to leave			50-59				Widowed			Other	Doctor of Philosophy (or equivalent)	
	Other			>59								Vocational training	
												Other	

6.1.5. While many Service leavers experience successful transitions, others can face challenges including ill health, unemployment, debt and homelessness

Although the majority of Service leavers undergo a smooth transition to civilian life, others may be more affected by challenges associated with leaving the Armed Forces. These can include challenges in relation to having to adapt to a new civilian lifestyle, identity and relationships. Other challenges relate to the more practical aspects of transition, which include (re-)entry to civilian employment, finding new accommodation, and dealing with financial independence. Furthermore, substance abuse, mental health issues (e.g. PTSD) and physical health issues can create challenges relating to the transition process. The literature reviewed identifies a number of linkages between these challenges: for example, several studies have found a causal relationship between the physical and mental health of military personnel, due to the distress caused by the physical condition.

According to the literature reviewed, certain Service leaver types are more vulnerable to experiencing transition challenges than others. These include (i) ESLs, some of whom are reportedly vulnerable to mental health issues, employment difficulties, homelessness, and substance abuse, and who lack access to the full suite of UK resettlement support; (ii) some Service leavers who have been involuntarily discharged and who may experience feelings of rejection, homelessness and mental health issues; and (iii) Service leavers with deployment and/or combat experience, given that this experience can expose individuals to traumatic events and can in some cases increase rates of violent offending, physical and mental issues, homelessness and premature mortality. Certain demographic factors, such as age (youth) or a disadvantaged socio-economic background are also reported in several sources to create transition challenges for Service leavers.

6.1.6. Comparator groups face a range of interlinked challenges, many of which are similar to those faced by Service leavers

Several challenges applicable to Service leavers were identified in the review of comparator groups (i.e. bereaved individuals, divorcees, skilled migrants, former prisoners, individuals who experience involuntary job loss, individuals who leave a career with a strong professional culture, foster care leavers and university starters). These relate to:

- **Mental and emotional challenges**, which includes the emotional issues experienced during transition, as well as more serious mental health conditions such as depression and PTSD;
- **Physical health**, which includes health indicators such as blood pressure and risk of morbidity and, together with mental health, includes substance abuse including drug and alcohol use;
- **Relationships with others**, which refers both to the challenges in maintaining existing relationships in the context of transition, and in forming new relationships;
- **Relocation,** which refers to the challenges associated with a physical change in location, such as moving between cities in the same country, or moving to a new country;
- **Rehousing**, which refers specifically to the challenge of finding stable and appropriate accommodation;
- **Change of identity**, which considers the challenges surrounding self-perception and self-definition;
- **Independent living**, which includes factors such as managing personal finances, and undertaking more administrative tasks, such as registering for healthcare services and ensuring household tasks are completed; and
- **Challenges of employment**, which includes challenges in finding, maintaining, and transitioning between jobs.

According to the literature reviewed, each comparator group experiences a wide range of challenges when undergoing its particular transition. Most of the challenges listed above are relevant to most comparator groups, albeit in varying ways and to different degrees. Challenges associated with mental health, for example, are common across all comparator groups, but feature particularly strongly in the literature on bereavement or divorce, and less so in the literature on the experiences of young people starting university. As with Service leavers, a number of challenges may be present during the transition period.

In a similar way to the challenges affecting some Service leavers (see Section 6.1.5), comparator group challenges can often reinforce each other to create a particularly difficult transition experience. In the case of prison release, for example, challenges associated with mental health and substance abuse are linked closely to challenges of both relocation and employment, with individuals who experience mental health difficulties or substance abuse often having more difficulty finding and maintaining suitable housing and a stable job. Challenges of transition should therefore not be considered in isolation, as this would overlook the complex ways in which these challenges are interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

6.1.7. Reviewed research offers insights into how resilience can shape transition experiences for Service leavers

The literature reviewed finds that 'resilience' can both support and hinder transition experiences for Service leavers. On the one hand, research finds that individual resilience among transitioning Service leavers can help them adjust, address challenges more effectively, and navigate uncertainties after they leave the military. At the community level, peer support and comradeship are also associated with successful transition in the context of recovery from substance abuse and the ability to address other transition challenges. However, the literature also finds that the 'can-do', tough and resilient attitude institutionalised by the military can be a barrier to seeking help in the civilian world, which can adversely affect transition experiences and outcomes.

There is limited discussion of the relationship between resilience and transition outcomes in the literature. Papers reviewed instead often focus on related concepts that reportedly enhance or impede the success of a military-to-civilian transition. For example, among the most frequently mentioned factors contributing to successful transitions are support groups and peer networks that address the challenges associated with Service leavers' feelings of isolation. Other studies identify fulfilling employment, effective communication, good mental health and positive approaches to handling challenges as drivers of successful transition. Conversely, the research reviewed highlights factors that can complicate transition, including unemployment, financial difficulties, personal health issues (e.g. PTSD), and relationship breakdown.

In summary, despite indicative evidence from the 2016 FiMT Life Transitions consultation to suggest that resilience plays an important role in supporting transition from military to civilian life, this report finds that there is not sufficient UK evidence either to substantiate or challenge this claim. What can be said is that there is an (albeit limited) body of evidence linking employment, communication, mental health, personal relationships, financial issues, and other factors relating indirectly to resilience, to transition experiences and outcomes. In relation to the comparator group analysis, however, 'resilience' is found to play a role in supporting transition experiences. As discussed further in Section 6.2 below, this body of literature across comparator groups may therefore serve as a rich source of information, adding to an existing understanding of ways in which 'resilience' can be conceptualised in the Service leaver context.

6.2. Recommendations for further research, policy and service provision

Building on the findings presented above, Section 6.2.1 outlines a set of recommendations for research funders and researchers. Section 6.2.2 then outlines areas for consideration by policymakers and relevant bodies engaged in support provision for UK Service leavers.[516]

6.2.1. Recommendations for research funders and researchers

Recommendation 1: Primary research should be undertaken to improve understanding of the relationship between Service leaver resilience and transition experiences

As discussed in Section 6.1, a central finding of this study is that the role of resilience in shaping transition experiences is not widely discussed in the literature reviewed. Undertaking primary research would accordingly be required to enhance understanding in this area. As a starting point for exploratory primary research, funding could be provided for a research organisation to conduct interviews with a sample of UK Service leavers (involving a minimum sample size of 50 interviewees, spanning different Services and Service leaver types). Given that resilience is often *not* assigned a specific definition and that the literature offers a range of indicators of 'successful transition', interview questions could focus on which definitions of 'resilience' and 'successful transition' resonate most clearly with the Service leavers interviewed. The interview questions could also focus on Service leavers' experiences of transition, their self-reported level of 'resilience' (with a clear definition and set of indicators developed), and their perceptions of how resilience may (or may not) have shaped their transition experiences and outcomes.

Recommendation 2: Qualitative primary research should be undertaken to enhance understanding of 'what works', for whom and why in transition to civilian life

Reflecting the content of the literature reviewed, discussions from the Expert Workshop highlighted that much of the research relating to Service leaver experiences focuses on challenges relating to housing, finances, employment and peer relationships, while there has been less analysis of positive experiences and outcomes for Service leavers. In light of this finding, there would be merit in conducting a study that seeks to: (i) scope and define the concept of 'successful military-to-civilian transition' and generate a related set of indicators; (ii) identify common drivers of and obstacles to successful transitions for Service leavers; (iii) present a set of case studies in order to outline the experiences of individual Service leavers; (iv) explore the links between specific types of support and positive transition outcomes; and (v) provide a set of recommendations for future interventions in this area. As with Recommendations 1and 2, a study of this type should draw on primary research methods, given the paucity of secondary data in this area.

Recommendation 3: 'Deeper dive' research into the support provided for one or more comparator groups could offer lessons for the Service leaver context

A core finding of this study is that while the literature on resilience and transition is relatively sparse in the military context, the comparator group literature may offer a richer base of evidence. As mentioned in Section 6.1, the comparator group literature may therefore serve as a valuable source of information,

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[516] As outlined in the study Terms of Reference (2017), our recommendations are primarily focused on areas for future research but – where the evidence allows – additional recommendations for policymakers and service providers have been identified and included.

adding to an existing understanding of ways in which 'resilience' can be conceptualised in the Service leaver context. There would be benefit to further developing the findings of Chapter 5 by conducting more in-depth research into the support provided for one (or more) comparator groups.

In determining on which group(s) to focus the analysis, selection criteria should consider relevance (i.e. ensuring that the comparator group(s) share characteristics that are applicable to Service leavers); and feasibility (i.e. ensuring that there are existing support programmes in place with sufficient data to analyse).[517] Discussions at the Expert Workshop indicated that 'professional athletes' (within the 'individuals who leave a career with a strong professional culture' comparator group) could be a particularly appropriate candidate for this analysis given several shared characteristics with Service leavers, including a disciplined schedule and 'post-transition' challenges in navigating health services, contrasting with their previous experiences of access to professional support.

Following selection of the comparator group(s), to conduct the study we would recommend producing a list of examples of support provided to the comparator group(s) during their 'transition'. A qualitative case study analysis could then be conducted in order to identify the factors underpinning the effectiveness of these interventions in assisting individuals through the 'transition' process, before analysing common features across the different case study interventions considered. Following these phases of analysis, researchers could assess the applicability of these approaches to Service leavers against an assessment framework designed for this purpose.

Recommendation 4: More funding for longitudinal research should be allocated to support an enhanced understanding of transition experiences over time

This report notes a shortage of longitudinal research in the area of Service leaver resilience and transition, with our resilience and transition review identifying only three studies[518] based on a longitudinal approach.[519] As also observed in the literature reviewed,[520] we consider that longitudinal research in this area would be beneficial to understanding both the longer-term transition experiences of individual Service leavers and the challenges they may face at different points in the transition process. While this would require an ongoing cost commitment from the research funder, this could contribute to improvements in both policy and service provision.

To conduct this research, we recommend that researchers engage with Service leavers through surveys, interviews and/or focus groups in order to track their transition experiences over time. Research engagement could take place at the following stages: (i) the point of joining the Armed Forces; (ii) at

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[517] The results in Table A-6 in Annex A.3 provide an insight into the volume of literature corresponding to the comparator groups included in this study. However, given the breadth of the initial inclusion/exclusion criteria used to produce this table, it should only be used as a starting point for further research on the feasibility of various comparator groups.

[518] Bobrow et al. (2013); Hourani et al. (2012); Van Staden, Fear et al. (2007).

[519] Longitudinal research is based on a research design that involves repeated observations of the same variables over a period of time. The studies reviewed instead employ methods not designed to observe change in Service leaver behaviours and transition outcomes over a period of time (e.g. one-time surveys or secondary data analysis). See Annex B.1.

[520] See, for example, Black & Papile (2010); Bobrow, Cook et al. (2013); Ray & Heaslip (2011).

regular intervals throughout Service life; and (iii) following departure from the military (e.g. at 6, 12 and 24 months, and then over 5-10-year intervals in the longer term).

This approach would require an ongoing cost and time commitment and could pose a number of sampling challenges. Nonetheless, these longitudinal data would offer researchers a valuable tool for understanding variability in individual transition experiences and areas of vulnerability that may affect specific 'types' of Service leavers – particularly if detailed demographic information for Service leavers is captured in a structured way, potentially drawing on the types of categories presented in our outline Service leavers data capture template (see Section 3.2). This would, in turn, equip policymakers with a robust evidence base for tailoring future support.

6.2.2. Recommendations for policymakers and service providers

Recommendation 5: Data collection on Service leaver resilience and transition should be systematised and information sharing practices improved
As discussed in Section 3.2, the design of a standardised typology of Service leavers is challenging given the unique nature of individual Service leaver circumstances and characteristics. However, it would be possible to capture a more granular dataset relating to the demographics and wider circumstances of Service leavers. This could be accomplished by further developing and standardising a template such as the 'Service leavers data capture template' example presented in Section 3.2. This would in turn allow for more nuanced insights to be derived in relation to transition experiences, challenges and support measures.

At present, different organisations may collect Service leaver data in different formats and degrees of detail. A move towards the standardisation of the type and format of the data collected through the use of a common data capture template would significantly improve the quality of foundational data. The data capture template – and associated guidelines for use – would need to be agreed and owned, and would necessarily require iteration to ensure coherence with existing systems. This could be done by the MOD or by a service provider, drawing on wider consultation with research and policy organisations, and would need to be publicised widely to ensure uptake. The utility of this template would also depend, in part, on the ability and willingness of government organisations and service providers to share (anonymised) Service leaver data and findings.

Recommendation 6: Policymakers and service providers should continue to develop support mechanisms designed to prepare personnel for transition *before* as well as *at* and *after* the point of departure
As noted in Chapter 2, several papers identify a positive link between individual preparedness for transition and transition 'success'.[521] Similarly, the literature finds that a lack of preparation and knowledge on how to deal with aspects of civilian life is a challenge that can affect Service leavers (see Section 4.1). Despite these findings, Expert Workshop participants noted that in some areas there could be more pre-discharge support offered to personnel to build their resilience in order to prepare them for leaving the Armed Forces. In light of these discussions, we consider that there would be merit in further

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[521] See, for example, McDermott (2007) and Shield (2016).

developing support initiatives for implementation earlier in Service careers in order to prepare personnel for the transition process.

This support could first be offered one year after entry to the Armed Forces, and delivered periodically thereafter (for example, at three-year intervals or another time period as considered appropriate). Early support could include the provision of guidance, mentoring and/or transition training aimed at developing the resilience required to navigate transition challenges. To support this process, links could also be established between serving personnel and veterans through buddy programmes, social networks, conferences or visits. These would be designed to raise awareness of the potential challenges that Service leavers can face, as well as what 'successful transition' can look like and the preparatory activities that can underpin it.

Recommendation 7: Integrated support should be offered to UK Service leavers in recognition of the links between challenges associated with transition

Our analysis of challenges faced by Service leavers and comparator groups found that these challenges can often reinforce each another to create a particularly difficult transition experience. As discussed in Section 6.1.6, comparator group challenges relating to mental health and substance abuse can be linked to challenges of relocation and employment. Similarly, the Service leaver literature identifies a causal relationship between the physical and mental health of military personnel, due to the distress caused by physical conditions (see Section 6.1.5). In light of these findings, we recommend that support for Service leavers is designed to cut across multiple 'challenge areas', as considering challenges in isolation risks overlooking the complex relationships between them.

Discussion among Expert Workshop participants indicates that there is a growing awareness of the risks of a 'single-issue' focus without clear signposting of support across 'challenge areas'. Greater co-ordination and co-operation between policy areas and service providers could both permit the interdependence of certain challenges to be reflected in support provision and allow for more efficient, de-conflicted activity. More holistic support should focus not only on the *links between different challenge areas* but also on *support for the families of Service leavers*, in recognition that family relationships can have an impact on the well-being of Service leavers and their wider transition experiences.[522]

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[522] See, for example, Albertson, Irving et al. (2015); Elliott, Chargualaf et al. (2017); Ray & Heaslip (2011).

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Annex A. Research methods

This annex describes the research methods used to undertake this study, a summary of which is presented in Section 1.3. Section A.1 provides an overview of the 'resilience and transition review' approach, before Sections A.2 and A.3 describe respectively how the 'Service leaver types and challenges review' and 'comparator groups review' were undertaken.

A.1. Research approach: resilience and transition review

Two main methods were used to inform the findings presented in Chapter 2 of this report: a systematic review of academic literature and an REA of the grey literature. A secondary scoping review was conducted to identify examples of relevant ongoing research in the field of resilience and transition. The principal differences between these approaches can be summarised as follows:

- **Breadth of search strategy**. On the one hand, the systematic review has been designed to provide a broad overview of all existing research on resilience and transition within the parameters of the search strategy (see Table A.1). The REA and scoping review instead focus on a selection of studies within this field but do not claim to be comprehensive.[523]

- **Type of literature**. While the systematic review searched for academic papers (including meta-reviews, systematic reviews, randomised control trials (RCTs), longitudinal studies, independent evaluations, government documents and policy papers), the REA focuses on grey literature (including policy papers, research reports, doctoral theses, and conference transcripts). The scoping review covers both areas.

- **Review activities**. The systematic review has involved several additional activities that were not part of the REA or scoping review. Such activities included screening titles and abstracts of identified records when selecting studies (see 'Step 2' description below), and undertaking a quality assessment of shortlisted sources before extracting data (see Table A.2 below).

Regardless of these differences, the study team applied a similar approach to the three reviews, which was structured around four principal tasks (see Figure A.1). First, a search strategy was developed, defining search terms and parameters for the reviews ('step 1'). This step was followed by study searches and selection ('step 2'), and by data extraction for included studies ('step 3'). Finally, findings were written up in a narrative synthesis aligned with themes of interest to FiMT ('step 4'), with a particular focus on how the literature defines 'transition', 'resilience' and 'successful transition outcomes', and explored links

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[523] For further explanation of the differences between these types of review, please see: The National Archives (2014).

between resilience and transition outcomes. A secondary focus was also applied to how the literature highlights research gaps, and presents relevant policy and service provision. The following paragraphs describe the activities undertaken as part of these steps for the systematic review, REA and scoping review.

Figure A.1: Overview of research process for systematic review, REA and scoping review
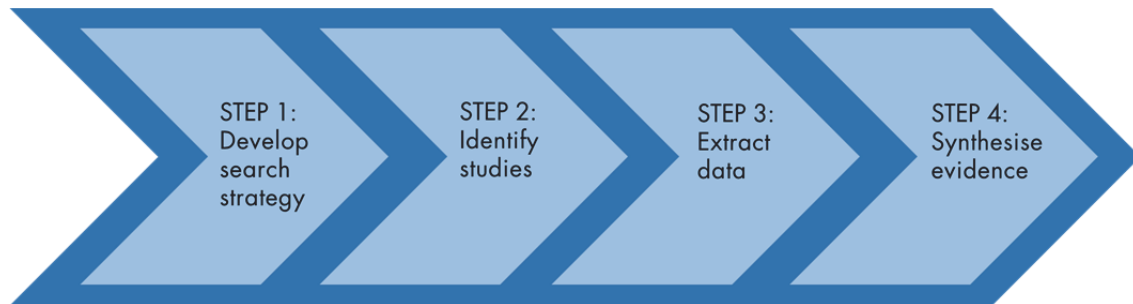
Step 1: Search strategy

Systematic review

The first task involved developing a search strategy in order to set out the parameters of the systematic review in advance. This was developed with the input and guidance of a RAND Librarian and in consultation with FiMT. The search strategy included details regarding selected databases and search terms, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied.

In order to develop the search strategy, a number of indicative search terms were piloted, and relevant databases identified. Pilot testing of search terms was conducted to help ensure that the terms were broad enough to include a range of relevant studies, but narrow enough that the search citation numbers were manageable. Following this pilot testing, the final search terms were: 'service leaver*' OR 'veteran*' OR 'military leaver*' combined with 'resilie*' OR 'hardiness' OR 'transition' OR 'adapt'. The literature search was conducted in November 2017 in the following databases:

- PubMed
- PsychInfo
- Scopus
- Web of Science
- Sociological Abstracts
- Military & Government Collection
- Academic Source Complete.

Figure A.2 presents the number of resulting papers from this initial database search:

Figure A.2: Systematic review study selection
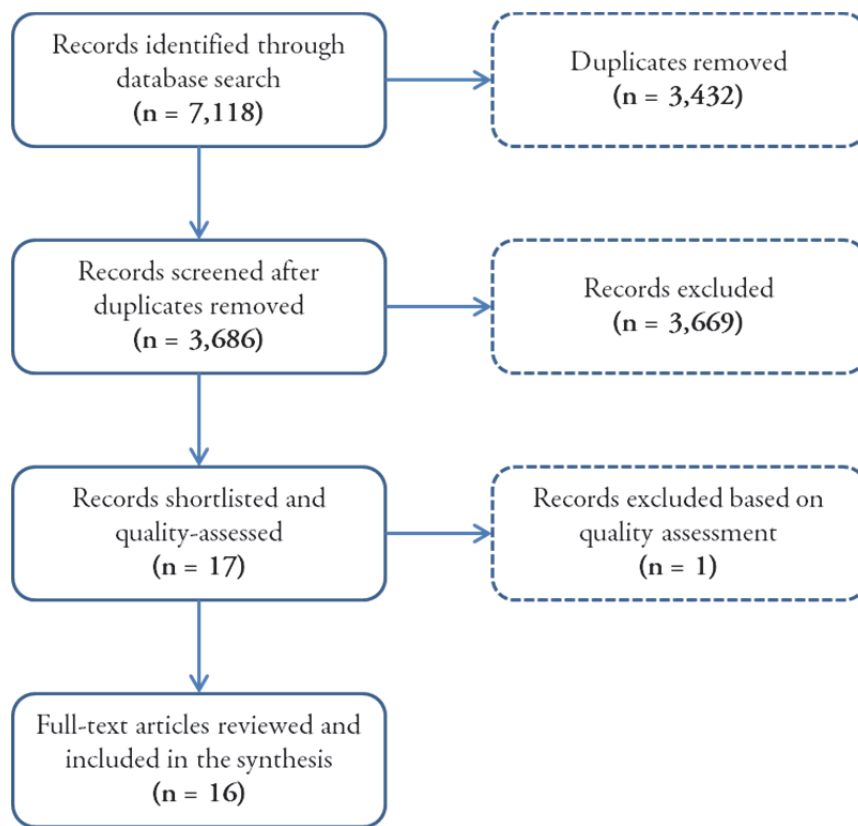
The initial literature search identified 7,118 studies, of which 3,432 were duplicates. After the titles and abstracts of the remaining articles were scanned for relevance (see 'step 2'), 3,669 were removed. Records were excluded based on population in cases where sources focused on current Armed Forces personnel or their families. Other records were excluded given their lack of relevance to the study scope: for example, much of the existing research tends to focus on the role of PTSD in Service leavers,[524] while other literature appears to focus on transition to and from military deployment.[525] Finally, one record was excluded on the basis of language review capacity.[526]

Before the shortlisted sources were read and reviewed in full, they were subjected to the quality assessment method detailed in 'step 2' below. As a result, the study team excluded one article categorised as 'low quality' from the final shortlist.[527] As Figure B.1 illustrates, 16 articles were found to focus on resilience and transition and were included in the full-text review. Of these articles, nine focused on the UK context, while the remaining seven focused on the US, Australian or Canadian contexts.

REA of grey literature

In parallel, the study team developed a search strategy for the REA of grey literature. The REA was carried out using the following five approaches, which were undertaken sequentially:

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[524] See, for example, Abraham et al. (2014); Acosta et al. (2017).

[525] See, for example, Ackerman et al. (2009); Adler et al. (2011).

[526] Alves Ferraz (2014).

[527] Özlen (2014).

- Searching Google using the search string applied to the systematic review of academic literature (see Section 1.3.1) and considering the first 50 search results only;
- Searching Google using the search string applied to the systematic review, adding the names of selected institutions with known publications in this area (e.g. MOD, FiMT, RAND), and considering the first 50 search results only;
- Searching the reference lists of academic papers and grey literature reports identified through the Google searches described above ('snowball searching');
- Searching the websites of 28 research institutes and non-profit-organisations identified as having published research in this domain either through the 'snowball searching' or through searching RAND Europe transcript notes from a 2017 conference;[528] and
- Conducting a final, more general search for literature on Google using a range of key words associated with military transition and resilience.

This search resulted in the identification of 59 records, subsequently shortlisted to 12 papers for full-text review (see 'step 2').

Scoping review of ongoing research

Complementing the systematic review and REA of published research, the study team scanned the websites of 28 research institutes and not-for-profit organisations that had been identified through 'snowball' searching and through conference attendance[529] (see above) as currently undertaking research in this area. A comprehensive search of the FiMT website was not carried out, as it was assumed that FiMT would be particularly interested in research sponsored and conducted by other stakeholders in the field. A number of FiMT articles were nonetheless identified through the broader search and included in this study. This approach resulted in the identification of 19 examples of ongoing research for analysis.

A set of inclusion and exclusion criteria was developed and applied to the systematic review, REA and scoping review, following refinement in consultation with FiMT. These criteria are presented in Table A.1, before Figure A.1 presents the number of records identified by the initial database search, the number of records excluded, and the number of remaining sources reviewed and included in the systematic review.

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[528] RAND Europe Author's Notes (2017).

[529] RAND Europe Author's Notes (2017).

Table A.1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	Rationale
Research focus	Literature that explicitly focuses on resilience and transition from military to civilian life.	Research not concerned with the thematic areas specified in the inclusion criteria.	The research focused on the thematic area discussed and agreed with FiMT at the beginning of the study. The focus on resilience and transition follows FiMT's 2016 consultation on Life Transitions, where resilience was identified as a central factor in successful transition.
Population	All Service leavers.[530]	Not concerned with the population specified in the inclusion criteria.	Following discussion with FiMT, the decision was taken to focus on Service leavers only. This decision was made in light of the high volume of results yielded by pilot searches focusing on Service leavers and serving personnel (17,276 hits).
Country	All (no limit on countries).	None.	The UK is the country of primary interest in the context of this study. However, pilot searches found that a lot of the literature focuses on the United States. As such, the study team expanded the search beyond the UK to focus on other countries in order to identify transferrable lessons (although it was beyond the scope of the study to assess the applicability of source

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[530] This encompasses all Service leavers, regardless of the conditions of their departure. The different Service leaver types identified in the literature are examined in Chapter 3.

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	Rationale
			material from non-UK countries to the UK).
Study design	Meta-reviews, systematic reviews, randomised control trials (RCTs), longitudinal studies, independent evaluations, government documents, policy papers.	Media articles, documents without clear organisational authorship, letters, editorials, comments, book reviews.	The 'study design' selection criteria are intended to optimise the quality of sources in the literature search.
Language	Any language.	None (RAND Europe staff language capabilities permitting).	It was expected that literature searches applying the English-language search terms presented earlier in this section would mostly yield English-language sources. However, the study team was open to reviewing sources in other languages where these were identified by the searches and where the linguistic capability existed among RAND researchers. However, the searches only yielded English-language sources, so reviewing sources in other languages was not required.
Publication date	2001–present.	Researched published before 2001.	This date range was selected in order to ensure that the literature reviewed is up-to-date and relevant, while keeping the range broad enough to yield sufficient results.

Step 2: Study selection

Systematic review

Applying the final search terms, the study team performed a search on text words in the titles and abstracts of records within the seven selected databases. All search results were then loaded into EndNote bibliographic software before titles and abstracts of these records were screened for relevance against the criteria specified in Table A.2. When screening the titles and abstracts of records, a researcher coded whether records should be included or excluded from the full text review (see 'Step 3'). Records were excluded if the titles and abstracts did not meet the specified research focus, population, country, study design, language and publication date inclusion criteria (see Table A.2). Borderline cases were discussed with a second researcher before the decision was taken to include or exclude these papers.

Focusing on the papers shortlisted for full text review following this screening process, one researcher conducted a quality assessment to ensure that only high- and medium-quality peer-reviewed articles were included in the full-text review, with 'low' quality and/or articles that had not been peer-reviewed excluded from the review. 'Borderline' cases were discussed with a second researcher. This quality assessment involved scanning the full text of shortlisted papers. As Table A.2 below shows, this assessment was designed to examine quality of methodology, analysis, relevance, research ethics, and impact on policy and/or theory. Shortlisted articles meeting the quality threshold were then reviewed in full by a researcher.

The quality assessment was designed to help the research team evaluate the standard of sources identified in the systematic review in relation to the five areas of assessment (see Table A.2), and to exclude those that did not meet these quality standards. This quality assessment approach was devised by the RAND research team on the basis of (i) an internal discussion focused on developing clear, straightforward assessment criteria consistent with RAND's standards of quality and objectivity; and (ii) adapting the 'quality factors' presented in *Quality in Qualitative Evaluation: A Framework for Assessing Research Evidence.*[531]

Table A.2 Quality assessment method

	High	**Medium**	**Low**
Methodology	Explicitly states and develops stated methodology.	Provides limited explanation of methodology.	Methodology poorly developed and/or described.
Analysis	Presents a balanced and evidence-based analysis.	Presents a somewhat balanced and evidence-based analysis.	Presents an unbalanced analysis not grounded in empirical evidence.

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[531] Spencer et al. (2003, 71).

Relevance	Is timely and relevant.	Is somewhat timely and relevant.	Lacks relevance.
Ethics	Clearly demonstrates ethical considerations where appropriate.	Somewhat demonstrates ethical considerations where appropriate.	Does not demonstrate ethical considerations.
Impact	Makes a strong contribution to policy/theory (*e.g. presents a novel finding or method, or directly contributes to the design and implementation of new policy*).	Somewhat contributes to policy/theory (*e.g. builds on an existing finding or method, or supports the implementation of an existing policy*).	Makes no substantive contribution to policy/theory.

REA of grey literature and scoping review of ongoing research

To select grey and ongoing literature, the RAND study team applied the search approaches described in 'step 1', with the study team selecting papers that appeared particularly relevant for full-text review. Studies focusing on the links between resilience (or factors relating to resilience) *and* transition were included in the full text reviews, with studies that did not address this link excluded from the final reviews. Given that these reviews were not systematic, a formal quality assessment was not applied beyond the researcher's assessment of sources' rigour and relevance to the aims of the study.

Step 3: Data extraction

Systematic review, REA of grey literature and scoping review of ongoing research

For the systematic review, REA and scoping review, the full text review involved extracting data from the shortlisted papers, and categorising these in an Excel spreadsheet. Following identification of relevant studies, data were extracted for each paper on:

- Bibliographic information;
- Population (i.e. type/years of Service, gender, age, conditions of leave) (systematic review only);
- Study design and purpose (systematic review only);
- Focus country/ies;
- Key findings (i.e. definitions of resilience, transition and 'successful' transition; links between resilience and transition; content on transition support programmes; key research gaps); and
- Quality assessment (systematic review only).

A lighter touch data extraction approach was applied to the scoping review of ongoing research, which involved a less detailed write-up of source data in the template. This approach was taken given the

secondary role of ongoing research in the study methodology, and the reduced level of information that is typically available for ongoing studies in comparison to published academic and grey literature.

Step 4: Synthesis

Systematic review, REA of grey literature and scoping review of ongoing research

In order to collate and summarise the findings from the studies included in the three reviews, they were analysed according to the following themes: (1) key definitions (in relation to resilience, transition, 'successful' transition outcomes, and related factors); (2) evidence of links between resilience and transition experiences and/or outcomes; (3) research gaps in relation to the literature reviewed; and (4) evidence of policy and programming designed to strengthen resilience and transition (noting that this was a secondary focus of the review). A quantitative overview of reviewed studies was also provided through an analysis of included and excluded studies at the initial searching, screening and (where applicable – see above) data extraction stages.

A.2. Research approach: Service leaver types and challenges review

The findings presented in Chapters 3 and 4 are based on an REA of academic and grey literature. As with the resilience and transition review approach described in Section A.1, the Service leaver types and challenges review involved four steps focused on: developing a search strategy ('step 1'), selecting studies for review ('step 2'), extracting data for included studies ('step 3'), and writing up findings in a narrative synthesis ('step 4'). These steps are described in more detail in the following sections.

Step 1: Search strategy

The first task involved developing a search strategy in order to establish in advance the parameters of the REA of academic and grey literature. This was developed with the input and guidance of a RAND Librarian and in consultation with FiMT. The following section provides an outline of the search strategy (including selected databases and search terms), and of the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied.

In order to develop the search strategy, a number of indicative search terms were piloted and relevant databases identified. Pilot testing of search terms was conducted to help ensure that the terms were broad enough to include a range of relevant studies, but narrow enough that the search citation numbers were manageable. Following this pilot testing, the final search terms were: 'service leaver*' OR 'veteran*' OR 'military leaver*' combined with 'transition*' OR 'adapt*' OR challeng*' OR 'adversit*' combined with 'taxonom*' OR 'type' OR 'typology' OR categori*' OR 'classif*' OR 'distinction' combined with 'civilian life.' The literature search was conducted from late December 2017 to late January 2018 in the following databases:

- Google
- Google Scholar
- Web of Science
- Academic Source Complete

A set of inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed and applied to the REA. These criteria are presented in Table A.3.

Table A.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	Rationale
Research focus	Literature that (i) identifies different types of Service leavers; (ii) explores transition challenges facing Service leavers; and/or (iii) analyses the role that resilience and wider support can play in addressing these challenges.	Research not concerned with the thematic areas specified in the inclusion criteria.	The research focused on the thematic area discussed and agreed with FiMT at the beginning of the study.
Population	All Service leavers.	Not concerned with the population specified in the inclusion criteria.	The focus population for this study is Service leavers, and as such studies relating to serving personnel were excluded.
Country	All (no limit on countries), with a primary focus on the UK.	None.	The UK is the country of primary interest in the context of this study.
Study design	Meta-reviews, systematic reviews, randomised control trials (RCTs), longitudinal studies, literature reviews, qualitative studies, independent evaluations, government documents, policy papers.	Media articles, documents without clear authorship, letters, editorials, comments, book reviews, PhD and Master's theses.	The 'study design' selection criteria are intended to ensure the optimal quality of the sources included in the literature search.
Language	English.	None.	Language was restricted to maintain focus on the UK-specific context. However, the study team was open to reviewing sources in other

			languages where these were identified by the searches and where the linguistic capability existed among RAND researchers. However, the searches only yielded English-language sources, so reviewing sources in other languages was not required.
Publication date	2008–present.	Researched published before 2008.	This date range was selected in order to ensure that the literature reviewed is up-to-date and relevant, while keeping the range broad enough to yield sufficient results. While the publication date range initially focused on literature published between 2000 and the present day, this range was later amended to 2008-present in order to limit the number of sources. However, one source from 2007 remained part of the literature review due to its relevance to the study objectives.

Within the parameters presented in Table A.3 above, we applied two different search approaches to both the grey and the academic literature review. The first approach involved scanning the highest-ranking 40 Google hits and 40 Google Scholar hits for relevance. In the other, the search string was applied to two academic databases: Academic Source Complete and Web of Science. No document limit was imposed on the latter search, as a pilot search had shown that there were very few relevant sources.

We also consulted a RAND subject matter expert, Agnes Schaefer, and policy contacts within the UK MOD to identify additional relevant source material. Certain sources were also recommended for inclusion based on resilience and transition review. Additional sources were identified through 'snowball' searching. This search approach resulted in the initial identification of 972 records, subsequently shortlisted to 29 papers for full-text review (see 'step 2').

Figure A.3 presents the down-selection process:

Figure A.3: Systematic review study selection

Initial search hits from academic databases and Google/Google scholar searches (n = 972)

Sources removed based on inclusion/exclusion criteria (n = 915)

Total number of articles in initial shortlist (n = 57)

Sources removed based on down-selection process (n = 28)

Sources identified for in-depth reading and data extraction (n = 29)
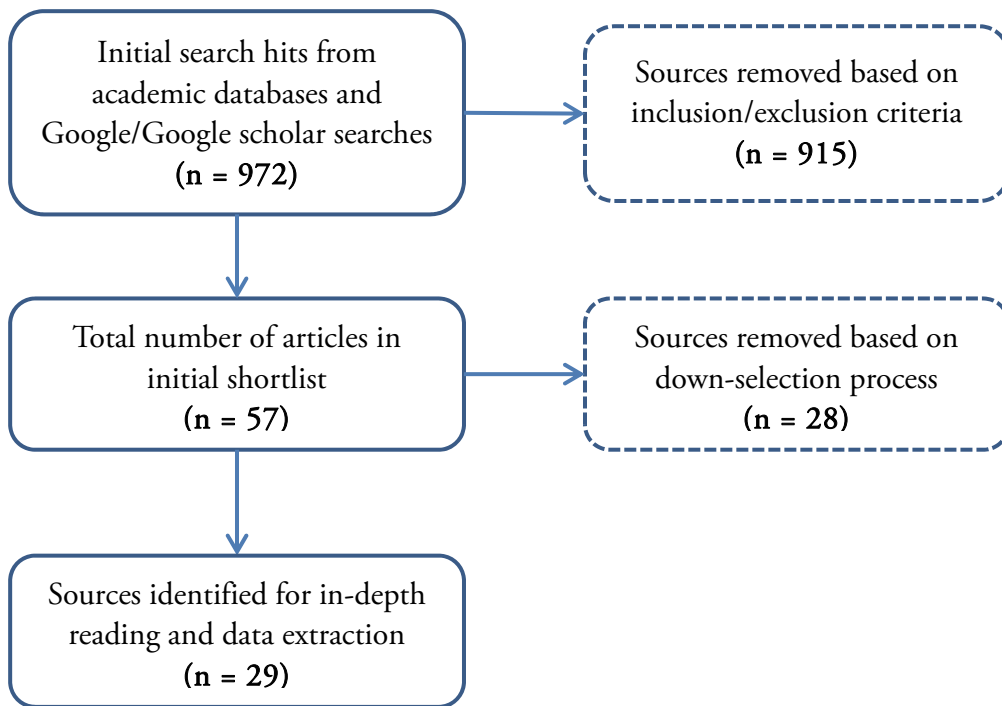
Step 2: Study selection

The search conducted through Academic Source Complete and Web of Science yielded a small number of relevant abstracts (eight). It was therefore possible to review all relevant abstracts and full-length texts yielded by this search, while scanning Google and Google Scholar for relevant papers to ensure we had not set the search terms too narrowly. To select the material identified through the Google and Google Scholar search, the study team either scanned the abstracts provided on the search page or opened the web page or article to determine its relevance. All academic articles reviewed were assessed in relation to the categories in the Quality Assessment approach presented in Table A.2 of Section A.1. With regard to the grey literature, certain Quality Assessment criteria, such as 'Methodology' or 'Ethics', were not applicable

to documentation such as policy documents or fact sheets. Therefore, the quality of grey literature was assessed in relation to the three remaining criteria: Analysis (whether the study provides a balanced and evidence-based analysis), Relevance and Impact (please refer to Table A.2 for expanded explanations of these criteria).

In both searches, studies deemed 'high quality' or 'medium quality', which fell within the publication date range and focused on Service leaver types and transition and challenges, were included in the review (see Table A.3). Studies that did not focus on these areas or where the quality was considered to be 'low' were excluded from the final review.

Step 3: Data extraction

For each shortlisted source included in the final review, one researcher populated an Excel spreadsheet with the following data:

- Bibliographic information;
- Focus country;
- Study purpose and methodological limitations;
- Quality assessment (academic sources only);
- Demographic information on Service leaver population(s), including Service information, years of Service, gender and age;
- Whether the source offers a typology of Service leavers;
- Personal circumstances of Service leavers upon leaving the military (e.g. physical injury, mental trauma);
- Challenges faced by (different types of) Service leavers; and
- Role of resilience and wider support in addressing these challenges.

Step 4: Synthesis

In order to collate and summarise the findings from all documents reviewed, one researcher analysed sources according to the following themes:

- Demographic information provided on Service leavers;
- Service leaver typologies offered by the literature, including personal characteristics (e.g. physical injury, mental trauma) by 'type';
- Challenges faced by Service leavers (both in general terms and specific to different types of Service leavers);
- Role of resilience in addressing transition challenges;
- Availability of wider support to address these challenges; and
- Research gaps in relation to the literature reviewed.

This analysis was further refined through constructive challenge and discussion at an internal workshop with the study team.

A.3. Research approach: comparator groups review

The findings presented in Chapter 5 are based on an REA of academic and grey literature. As with the review approaches outlined in Sections A.1 and A.2, the comparator groups review involved four steps. The first involved creating a longlist of potentially relevant academic and grey literature sources ('step 1') before down-selecting these sources into a shortlist of relevant papers ('step 2'). As described in step 2, the initial down-selection method was not sufficient to reduce the hits to a manageable number for the data extraction stage, and so an additional round of selection was added. This shortlist was reviewed in detail, with relevant information identified and extracted into a data extraction template ('step 3'), before being analysed and presented in a narrative synthesis ('step 4').

Step 1: Search strategy

In order to compile a longlist of literature relating to the transition challenges faced by the eight comparator groups, a search strategy was developed that combined a systematic search of two academic databases together with a looser search of academic and grey literature sources on Google and Google Scholar.

Searching academic literature databases

The study team searched two academic databases – Web of Science and Academic Search Complete – using a pre-defined and tailored search string. These search strings were developed through consultation with a RAND librarian to help maximise the number of relevant studies returned by each search. The final search strings are shown in Table A.4 below, with the searches restricted to articles from the last ten years.

Table A.4 Search strings used for different comparator groups

Comparator group	Database ASC = Academic Search Complete WoS = Web of Science	Search string
Bereaved individuals	ASC	Challeng* AND resilie* OR transition* OR adapt* AND death* OR bereave* AND spouse OR partner OR husband OR wife OR parent OR child* OR sibling* OR brother OR sister
	WoS	Challeng* AND resilie* OR transition* OR adapt* AND death* OR bereave* AND spouse OR partner OR husband OR wife OR parent OR child* OR sibling* OR brother OR sister
Divorcees	ASC	Challeng* AND resilie* OR transition* OR adapt* AND divorc* AND spous* OR partner* OR wife OR wives OR husband*
	WoS	Challeng* AND resilie* OR transition* OR adapt* AND divorc* AND spous* OR partner* OR wife OR wives OR husband*
Skilled migrants	ASC	Challeng* AND resilie* OR transition* OR adapt* AND migrant* OR expat*
	WoS	Challeng* AND resilie* OR transition* OR adapt* AND migrant* OR expat*
Former prisoners	ASC	Challeng* AND resilie* OR transition* OR adapt* AND discharge* OR release* AND prisoner* OR convict* OR detainee*

	WoS	Challeng* AND resilie* OR transition* OR adapt* AND discharge* OR release* AND prisoner* OR convict* OR detainee*
Individuals who experience involuntary job loss	ASC	Challeng* AND resilie* OR transition* OR adapt* AND career* OR profession* OR job* AND redundan* OR setback*
	WoS	Challeng* AND resilie* OR transition* OR adapt* AND career* OR profession* OR job* AND redundan* OR setback*
Individuals who leave a career with a strong professional culture	ASC	Challeng* AND resilie* OR transition* OR adapt* AND leav* OR retir* AND Athlete* OR police* OR 'fire Service' OR 'Fire fighter' OR fireman OR firewoman OR SU elite athletes OR SU criminal justice personnel
	WoS	Challeng* AND resilie* OR transition* OR adapt* AND leav* OR retir* AND Athlete* OR police* OR 'fire Service' OR 'Fire fighter' OR fireman OR firewoman
Foster care leavers	ASC	Challeng* AND resilie* OR transition* OR adapt* OR leav* AND (foster N3 care) OR (foster N3 system) AND child* OR youth OR young OR adolescen* OR teen*
	WoS	Challeng* AND resilie* OR transition* OR adapt* OR leav* AND (foster NEAR/3 care) OR (foster NEAR/3 system) AND child* OR youth OR young OR adolescen* OR teen*
University starters	ASC	Challeng* AND resilie* OR transition* OR adapt* OR leav* AND (universit* N3 student*) OR (college N3 student)
	WoS	Challeng* AND resilie* OR transition* OR adapt* OR leav* AND (universit* NEAR/3 student*) OR (college NEAR/3 student)

Additional academic and grey literature search

In order to supplement the search of academic literature databases, an additional search for academic and grey literature was conducted using Google and Google Scholar. This search was conducted in order to identify prominent academic articles not indexed on the two databases used in this REA, and to ensure that some examples of grey literature were also included in the longlist of sources.

The searches of Google and Google Scholar were conducted using adaptations of the search strings applied to the academic database searches, together with a number of additional, typically more *sentence-like* searches that were used in instances where the search results were perceived to be not quite capturing the nuance of article required. These search terms are outlined in Table A.5 below.

For all searches, only the first 20 hits were considered in each case, with sources initially selected by scanning their title in the Google search result. This was followed by a brief scan of the abstract and/or article in order to assess relevance and quality. Each search was entered both with and without the additional search term 'filetype:pdf', as this search term can help narrow down the results to published academic and grey literature sources that are more rigorous in nature than more basic HTML websites. Articles published before 2000 were rejected, as were grey literature sources that were either news reports, or self-help-styled website pages that did not include references to other literature sources.

Table A.5 : Search strings adapted for Google and Google Scholar search

Comparator group	Search strings adapted for Google and Google Scholar	Other search strings used on Google
Bereaved individuals	Challenge AND (resilience OR transition* OR adapt)* AND death* OR bereave* AND spouse OR partner OR husband OR wife OR parent OR child* OR sibling* OR brother OR sister	challenges of bereavement
Divorcees	Challenge AND (resilience OR transition OR adapt) AND divorce AND (spouse OR partner OR wife OR wives OR husband)	challenges of divorce; challenges of divorce for divorcees
Skilled migrants	Challenge AND (resilience OR transition OR adapt) AND (migrant OR expat)	migrant transition challenges; individual personal migrant transition challenges; individual personal skilled migrant professional transition challenge
Former prisoners	Challenge AND (resilience OR transition OR adapt) AND (discharge OR release) AND (prisoner OR convict OR detainee)	*Additional search not applied, as sufficient source material identified through search strings adapted for Google/Google Scholar*
Individuals who experience involuntary job loss	challenge AND (resilience OR transition OR adaption) AND (career OR profession OR job) AND (redundancy OR setback)	(difficulties OR challenges) AND (career OR job) AND (redundancy OR setback)
Individuals who leave a career with a strong professional culture	Challenge AND (resilience OR transition OR adapt) AND (leave OR retire) AND (Athlete OR police OR 'fire Service' OR 'Fire fighter' OR fireman OR firewoman OR SU elite athletes OR SU criminal justice personnel)	elite athletes retirement challenges; police retirement challenges filetype:pdf (firefighter OR 'fire Service' OR fireman OR firewoman) retirement challenges filetype:pdf
Foster care leavers	Challenge AND (resilience OR transition OR adapt OR leave OR alumni) AND ('foster care' OR 'foster system' OR 'out-of-homecare') AND (child OR youth OR young OR adolescent OR teen)	*Additional search not applied, as sufficient source material identified through search strings adapted for Google/Google Scholar*
University starters	Challenge AND (resilience OR transition OR adapt OR leave) AND (university OR college) AND student	challenges transition to university

Figure A.3 presents the number of records identified by the initial database search, the number of records excluded, and the number of remaining sources reviewed and included in the REA, which is further elaborated in Table A.6 below.

Figure A.4: Number of sources removed at each stage of the REA process
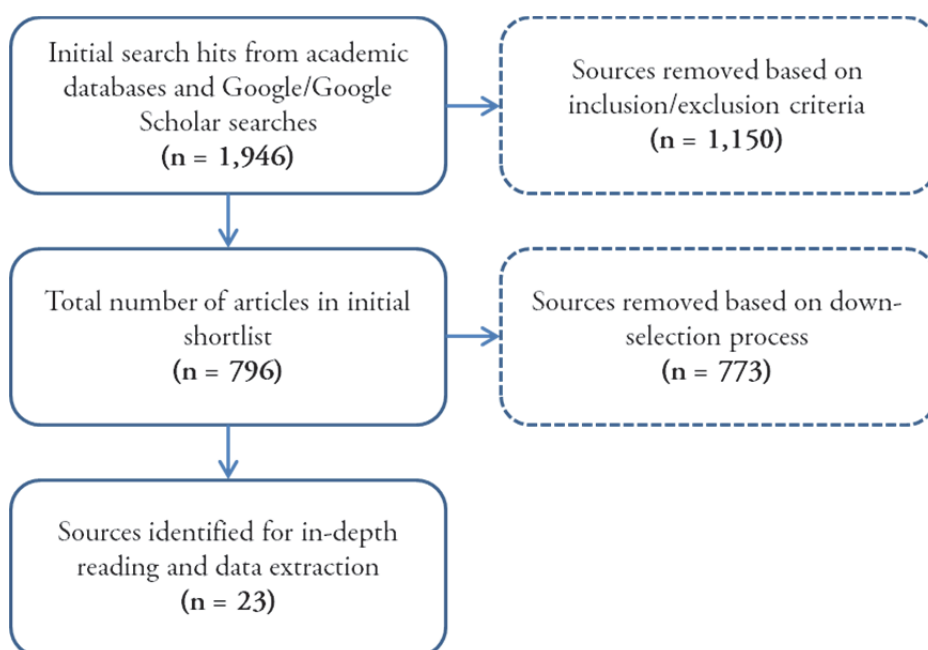
Step 2: Study selection

Table A.6 below outlines the total number of search hits from both the academic database literature searches, and the additional searches of Google and Google scholar. Having created a longlist of just under 2,000 articles, the next stage in the REA was to down-select these articles to a shortlist of sources that were both relevant to the study and of sufficient quality to be included in the literature review.

Developing an initial shortlist of relevant sources applying inclusion/exclusion criteria

Beginning with the first of these two steps, an initial sift of the 1,946 sources was carried out based on the inclusion/exclusion criteria outlined in Table A.7 below. The title and abstract of each source was reviewed, and if it matched all the inclusion criteria, and did not match any of the exclusion criteria, then the article was shortlisted for full-text review. The number of sources shortlisted for each comparator group is detailed in Table A.6 below.

As Table A.6 illustrates, the initial sift using the inclusion/exclusion criteria produced a quantity of articles that was considerably higher than the amount that could be feasibly or meaningfully taken forward to the data extraction stages of an REA. A considerable number of articles were found to identify and discuss the challenges of transition in some form, even when these challenges were not the primary subject of the source. These included studies that describe experiences of transition, evaluate particular interventions, and identify some of the factors that influence the probability of success or failure of transition.

Table A.6 Number of articles shortlisted after applying the inclusion/exclusion criteria

Comparator group	Hits from academic literature database	Number of relevant hits from Google and Google Scholar search	Total search hits	Number of shortlisted sources (i.e. pass inclusion/exclusion criteria)
Bereaved individuals	273	13	286	125
Divorcees	16	10	26	15
Skilled migrants	489	16	505	112
Former prisoners	46	11	57	38
Individuals who experience involuntary job loss	21	3	24	4
Individuals who leave career with a strong professional culture	21	11	32	25
Foster care leavers	190	29	219	94
University starters	768	29	797	383
Total search hits	-	-	**1,946**	-
Total number of articles in shortlist	-	-	-	**796**

Table A.7 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	Rationale
Research focus	Literature that explicitly identifies the challenges experienced by individuals in comparator groups during the associated transition period. This transition period is defined broadly to include any studies that associate these challenges with the particular change in circumstance, and is not restricted by time period.	Research not concerned with the thematic areas specified in the inclusion criteria.	The main research focus is on the identification of challenges experienced by individuals undergoing transitions that are in some way comparable to the military-to-civilian transition. Factors that influence the success of these transitions, including the 'resilience' of the individuals, are also of interest in this section, but are not included in the inclusion/exclusion criteria.
Population	Individuals identified as within the following comparator group: • Bereaved individuals • Divorcees • Skilled migrants • Former prisoners • Individuals who experience involuntary job loss • Individuals who leave a career with a strong professional culture • Foster care leavers • University starters.	Not concerned with the population specified in the inclusion criteria.	The comparator groups were identified as relevant to military-to-civilian transition through internal RAND research (literature review, internal workshop discussions).
Country	All (no limit on countries).	None.	The UK is the country of primary interest in the context of this study, but other countries were included in order to increase the pool of high-quality literature.

Study design	Meta-reviews, systematic reviews, randomised control trials (RCTs), longitudinal studies, independent evaluations, government documents, policy papers.	Media articles, documents without clear organisational authorship, letters, editorials, comments, book reviews, PhD theses.	The 'study design' selection criteria are intended to optimise the quality of sources in the literature search.
Language	English, French and Spanish.	All other languages.	It was expected that literature searches applying the English-language search terms presented earlier in Section 1.3 would mostly yield English-language sources. However, the study team was open to reviewing sources in other languages where these were identified by the searches and where the linguistic capability existed among RAND researchers, which in this instance included French and Spanish speakers. However, the searches only yielded English-language sources, so reviewing sources in other languages was not required.
Publication date	2000–present.	Researched published before 2000.	This date range was selected in order to ensure that the literature reviewed is up-to-date and relevant, while keeping the range broad enough to yield sufficient results.

Reducing the shortlist

Due to the high volume of sources in the shortlist, a down-selection of articles was required in order to produce a final number of articles that was small enough to carry out a detailed data extraction and analysis. The aim of this down-selection was to identify two to four articles for each comparator group that would collectively provide a sufficiently detailed, comprehensive and relevant insight into the challenges faced during their transition.

In order to achieve this aim, the down-selection was based on the following four factors from the inclusion/exclusion criteria:

- Publication date
- Study design (method)
- Country
- Research focus

When applying the inclusion/exclusion criteria in the previous step, a simple 'in-out' judgement was made. In this instance, however, the articles were compared and included/discarded according to the follow criteria:

- Recent publications were preferred over older publications, as recent publications were considered more likely to build on recent academic literature, and present findings that are more relevant to the present day.

- A mix of methods was sought across articles such that, where possible, at least one literature review and one study using primary data were included in the shortlist. This approach was taken in order to benefit from the different insights provided by different types of literature. A literature review was considered to be more likely to present a wide overview of the topic area, whereas a study using primary data (such as an interview or a survey) was considered more likely to provide an in-depth insight into a particular area of the wider topic.

- Articles published in the UK were prioritised over international publications, as these articles were considered to have greater relevance to the wider study and the UK context of FiMT's work. Sources from other English-speaking nations of comparable Western culture (primarily the Republic of Ireland, the United States, Canada and Australia) were also considered closely, as were non-English sources from Western European countries. The context of these studies was considered more comparable to the UK context than sources from other English- and non-English-speaking countries. Where possible, at least one source from the UK or the Republic of Ireland was included, although in some instances this was not adhered to when non-UK articles demonstrated a more appropriate focus or more rigorous method.

- The degree to which the source focused specifically on the challenges of transition was also considered, with priority given to sources where an investigation into these challenges constituted the primary focus of the study.

Again the aim was to identify two to four articles per group. Inevitably, this down-selection involved compromises between factors: in some instances, more recent articles were replaced by older yet more comprehensive and relevant studies; and similarly, in other instances, UK-based articles were replaced by

international articles that used a more appropriate and insightful method. When reviewing the articles in the shortlist, these factors were balanced against each other in order to produce a final selection sources that provided – as far as possible – a comprehensive and detailed overview of the challenges faced by a particular comparator group in a recent and relevant context. From the initial 1,946 sources identified, a final shortlist of 23 papers was included in the full-text review.

Step 3: Data extraction

One researcher then read the 23 sources selected in step 2 and outlined in Section B.3 in full, before extracting the relevant detail into a data extraction form.

In this study, the data extraction template included the categories outlined in Table A.8 below.

Table A.8 Categories included in the data extraction template

Main area	Sub-categories (where included)
Bibliographic information	ID, Author, Year, Title, Journal/ Publication/ Website, Ongoing/ Published research.
Country	
Study purpose	
Population	Occupation, Comparator group, Gender, Age, Conditions of transition (voluntary, involuntary, other relevant details).
Challenges	Challenges that are specific to this group
	Are these challenges applicable to Service leavers?
	Broader categorisation of challenges (change of identity, independent living, mental issues, physical issues, relocation, career transition, other).
Resilience and wider support	Role of resilience/wider support in addressing these challenges
	Is this wider support applicable to Service leavers?

Step 4: Synthesis

The final stage of the REA was for the researcher who had conducted the search and extracted source data to analyse the information collated in the data extraction template through a narrative synthesis. This synthesis was presented to other team members at an internal workshop, where the team challenged, discussed and refined the findings. For each comparator group, the challenges identified across the different literature sources were clustered according to one of eight types of challenge that emerged organically from reading the literature: mental health and emotional issues, physical health, relationships with others, change in identity, independent living, relocation, career transition, and 'other' challenges. These categories are presented at the start of Section 5.1, followed by a detailed discussion on each comparator group that explores some of the challenges faced during their respective transitions (Section 5.2). At the end of each comparator group, these challenges are summarised in a table, and the relevance to Service leavers is discussed based on the study team's understanding and earlier work on military-to-civilian transition.

Section 5.3 draws together these discussions, and attempts to identify higher-level themes that emerge from the challenges faced by all comparator groups, as well as discussing the ways in which these results may be relevant to the transition of Service leavers.

Annex B. Overview of reviewed literature

This annex describes the literature consulted as part of the three reviews described in Annex A. The literature reviewed as part of the resilience and transition review is outlined in Section B.1, and Sections B.2 and B.3 summarise the literature reviewed as part of the Service leaver types and challenges review and the comparator groups review respectively.

B.1. Reviewed literature: resilience and transition review

Systematic review

As elaborated in Annex A.1, the systematic review focused on 16 articles that met the inclusion criteria and quality assessment criteria outlined in Annex A.1. Of these, nine focused on the UK context while the remaining seven focused on the US, Australian or Canadian contexts. Half of the studies reviewed (eight of 16) included qualitative components, one was quantitative, and seven were based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. While only three studies[532] are based on a longitudinal[533] approach (one-six months), others highlight the importance of longitudinal research on the topic of transitioning to civilian life in their recommendations.[534]

Among the 16 sources selected for full review, the study team did not identify any systematic literature reviews on resilience and transition. Studies drew on a range of data sources, including interviews (five studies), surveys (five studies), workshops (two studies), experimental and quasi-experimental study design (two studies) and secondary data (seven studies).[535] Based on the quality assessment (see Section 1.3), nine of the 16 sources were deemed to be high quality,[536] with the remaining seven categorised as medium quality.[537] The articles reviewed were published between 2007 and 2017.

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[532] Bobrow et al. (2013); Hourani et al. (2012); Van Staden, Fear et al. (2007).

[533] Longitudinal research is based on a research design that involves repeated observations of the same variables over a period of time. The other studies reviewed employ methods not designed to observe change in Service leaver behaviours and transition outcomes over a period of time (e.g. one-time surveys or secondary data analysis).

[534] Black & Papile (2010); Bobrow, Cook et al. (2013); Ray & Heaslip (2011).

[535] As the figures indicate, in some cases the studies drew on a range of these research methods and approaches.

[536] Beech et al. (2017); Binks & Cambridge (2017); Black & Papile (2010); Bobrow, Cook et al. (2013); Elliott, Chargualaf et al. (2017); Herman & Yarwood (2014); Hourani, Bender et al. (2012); McGarry, Walklate et al. (2015); Van Staden, Fear et al. (2007).

[537] Albertson et al. (2015); Berle & Steel (2015); Bobrow, Cook et al. (2013); Bowen & Martin (2011); Buckman et al. (2013); Herman & Yarwood (2015); Knopf (2012); Ray & Heaslip (2011).

Table B.1 provides an overview of the 16 academic papers included in the systematic review.

Table B.1 Overview of academic literature

Author (date)	Journal (country)	Article title	Article type	Type of Service	Research method
Albertson, Irving, Best (2015)	The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice, US	A Social Capital Approach to Assisting Veterans Through Recovery and Desistance Transitions in Civilian Life	Academic article	Not specified	Qualitative, secondary data analysis
Beech, Gold, Beech (2017)	European Journal of Training and Development	Military lives: coaching transitions	Academic article	Not specified	Qualitative, Interviews (five veterans)
Berle, Steel (2015)	Australasian Psychiatry, Australia	Families of returned defence force personnel: a changing landscape of challenges	Academic article	All	Qualitative, secondary data analysis
Binks and Cambridge (2017)	Political Psychology, UK	The transition experiences of British military veterans	Academic article	All	Mixed methods, Interviews (seven veterans)
Black, Papile (2010)	Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy	Making it on Civvy Street: An online survey of Canadian veterans in transition	Academic article	All	Mixed methods Surveys (169 - 216 Service leavers)
Bobrow et al (2012)	Psychological Services, US	Coming All the Way Home: Integrative Community Care for Those Who Serve	Academic article	All	Mixed methods Surveys (347 Service leavers)

Author (date)	Journal (country)	Article title	Article type	Type of Service	Research method
Bowen and Martin (2011)	Journal of Human Behaviour and Social Environment, US	The Resiliency Model of Role Performance for Service Members, Veterans, and their Families: A Focus on Social Connections and Individual Assets	Academic article	Not specified	Mixed methods, Experimental study design (20,569 married Air Force members)
Buckman et al (2012)	The European Journal of Public Health	Early Service leavers: a study of the factors associated with premature separation from the UK Armed Forces and the mental health of those that leave early	Academic article	All	Mixed methods Surveys (845 Service leavers)
Elliott, Chargualaf, Patterson (2016)	Journal of Clinical Nursing, US	Military to civilian nurse: Personal and professional reconstruction	Academic article	Not specified	Qualitative, Interviews (ten veteran nurses)
Herman and Yarwood (2014)	Geoforum, UK	From services to civilian: The geographies of veterans' post-military lives	Academic article	All	Mixed methods Interviews (27 Service leavers)
Herman and Yarwood (2015)	Environment and Planning, UK	From warfare to welfare: veterans, military charities and the blurred spatiality of post-service welfare in the United Kingdom	Academic article	All	Qualitative, Interviews (25 service leavers and 11 charities)

Author (date)	Journal (country)	Article title	Article type	Type of Service	Research method
Hourani et al (2012)	Journal of Affective Disorders, US	Longitudinal study of resilience and mental health in marines leaving military service	Academic article	Navy	Quantitative, Surveys (475 Service leavers – marines)
Knopf (2012)	Political and Military Sociology, US	Relational dialectics in the civil-military relationship: Lessons from veterans' transition narratives	Academic article	Not specified	11 personal stories written by veterans and their relatives and posted on SupportYourVet.org
McGarry, Walklate, Mythen (2015)	Armed Forces & Society, UK	A Sociological Analysis of Military Resilience: Opening Up the Debate	Academic article	Not specified	Qualitative, secondary data analysis
Ray, Heaslip (2011)	Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing, Canada	Canadian military transitioning to civilian life: a discussion paper	Discussion paper	Not specified	Qualitative, secondary data analysis
Van Staden et al (2007)	Military Medicine, UK	Transition back into civilian life: A study of personnel leaving the UK armed forces via Military prison"	Academic article	All	Mixed methods Surveys (111 Service leavers that exited through MCTC)

REA of grey literature

By applying the search strategy described in Section A.1, the REA initially identified 59 grey literature sources that were relevant to resilience and/or transition. This initial approach did not apply a strict interpretation of the inclusion criteria, as the 59 articles identified through the initial search represented various publication types and degrees of relevance to the research question. In order to narrow down the search results to those that were most relevant to the research question, a more in-depth, full text search of the 59 sources was conducted to identify those making an explicit link between resilience and transition. The results of this additional filtering stage are contained in Table B.2 below. This table shows that 12 articles were identified as offering an analysis linking resilience (or factors relating to resilience) and transition, while the remaining 47 articles discuss one or both of the topics without drawing a connection between the two. It is the 12 linking articles that were included in the final REA of grey literature.

Table B.2 Grey literature study selection

Area of focus	Number of sources identified
Articles that discuss resilience and/or transition, but do not investigate the relationship between these two areas. (*excluded from final REA of grey literature*)	47
Articles that explicitly discuss the relationship between resilience and the difficulty and/or success of transition. (*included in final REA of grey literature*)	12

Of these 12 articles, seven focus on the US, three on the UK, and two on Canada. Most of the articles (seven) were produced by universities, while the remaining five articles were published by other types of organisation including research institutes (US-based Pew Research Centre and Canadian-based CIMVHR[538]), consultancies (Kantar Futures), and foundations (Business and Professional Women's Foundation). The majority (seven) of the sources are reports, while four are doctoral theses and one is a set of published presentation slides.

In total, seven of the grey literature sources use qualitative techniques, with the primary focus on literature reviews (four) and/or interviews (four).[539] A further source is in the form of a conference report that draws on presentations and discussion groups conducted across a two-day period. A total of six articles use quantitative techniques, with five drawing on survey analysis and one applying quantitative data methods to analyse semi-structured interviews.[540] The majority of articles reviewed (eight of the 12) were published between 2014 and 2017, with the earliest published in 2007 and the most recent in 2017.

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[538] CIMVHR: Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research.

[539] As the figures indicate, in one case the primary focus of the grey literature source was on both literature review and interviews.

[540] There are two articles that used both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Table B.3 provides an overview of the 12 grey literature sources included in the REA.

Table B.3 Overview of grey literature

Author (date)	Organisation (country)	Article title	Article type	Service type	Research method
Morin (2011a)	Pew Social Trends, US	The Difficult Transition from Military to Civilian Life	Report (policy paper)	US Navy, US Army, US Marine, US Air Force, US Coast Guard	Quantitative (survey of 1,853 US veterans)
Morin (2011b)	Pew Social Trends, US	For Many Injured Veterans, A Lifetime of Consequences	Report (policy paper)	US Navy, US Army, US Marine, US Air Force, US Coast Guard	Quantitative (survey of 1,853 US veterans)
Rotter (2015)	Fordham University, US	Resilience Of Israeli Soldiers In Transition From Military To Civilian Life: A Phenomenological Study	Doctoral thesis	Not specified	Qualitative (semi-structured interviews with 17 veterans)
Davies (2014)	Lancaster University, UK	Difficult Life Transitions: Learning and Digital Technologies in the Military to Civilian Transition	Report	Not specified	Qualitative (literature review)
Shields et al. (2016)	University of British Colombia, Canada	Mental Health and Well-Being of Military Veterans during Military to Civilian Transition: Review and Analysis of the Recent Literature.	Report	N/A (systematic literature review)	Qualitative (systematic literature review)

Author (date)	Organisation (country)	Article title	Article type	Service type	Research method
Squire (2017)	CIMVHR Forum, Canada	Determinants of Successful Transition	Presentation slides	Canadian Army, Canadian Navy, Canadian Airforce, Canadian multiple branches	Quantitative and qualitative (literature review; interviews and survey of 15 veterans)
Williams (2015)	Iowa State University, US	Boots on the ground: examining transition factors for military and veteran student academic success	Doctoral thesis	Not specified	Quantitative (survey of 2,408 undergraduate students with military experience)
McDermott (2007)	University of Leicester, UK	Old Soldiers Never Die: They Adapt Their Military Skills And Become Successful Civilians. What Factors Contribute To The Successful Transition Of Army Veterans To Civilian Life And Work?	Doctoral thesis	UK Army only	Quantitative and qualitative (interviews and analysis of 51 veterans with 22 years military experience)
BPW Foundation (2007)	BPW Foundation, US	Understanding the Complexity of Women Veterans' Career Transitions	Report	US Army, US Navy, US Air Force, US Marine Corps	Quantitative (survey of 1,629 female veterans)
Ursano et al. (2014)	University of the Health Sciences, US	Military Families in Transition: Stress, Resilience, and Well-being	Report (conference)	Not specified	Qualitative (conference report)

Author (date)	Organisation (country)	Article title	Article type	Service type	Research method
Lowe (2015)	National Louis University, US	Military Resilience and Transformation: A Narrative Inquiry Highlighting the Challenges Faced by Military Veterans of the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan During Their Transition from Combat to Civil Society	Doctoral thesis	US Navy, US Army, US Marine, US Air Force, US Coast Guard	Qualitative (narrative interviews of five veterans)
Kantar Futures (2017)	Kantar Futures, UK	Continue to Work: The Transition Mapping Study 2017[541]	Report	UK Royal Navy, UK Royal Army, UK Royal Air Force	Qualitative (literature review)

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[541] This is the most recent follow-on study to the 2013 FiMT 'Transition Mapping Study'. Source: FiMT (2013).

Scoping review of ongoing research

From the 28 websites scanned, a total of 19 relevant examples of ongoing research were found, although in the majority of cases the research topic was only loosely related to resilience and civilian-to-military transition. Table B.4 below lists the examples identified and the organisations involved in the research.

The majority of research (16 of 19 examples) is currently being conducted – either in part or entirely – by universities, with the remaining three examples conducted by the private sector[542] and by not-for-profit organisations.[543] In total, eight universities were found to be carrying out research related to resilience and military-to-civilian transition, although as described in the introduction, many of these studies are only loosely related to the topic. Just over one-third (seven) of ongoing research identified through this search is funded – either in part of in its entirety – by FiMT, and the remaining 12 projects are supported either by not-for-profit organisations (such as the Royal British Legion, Blesma and the Confederation of Service Charities – COBSEO), the UK Government (e.g. the NHS), or are self-funded by the research institutions and universities themselves.

Over half (11) describe the methods that they are employing, with the majority (six) using qualitative methods (primarily interviews). Of the remaining five studies, two use quantitative methods (surveys), two are evaluations, and one is a mapping exercise. The format of the majority of these studies is unclear, although in three cases the research is explicitly stated as being an MSc or PhD thesis.

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[542] Cobseo (n.d.).

[543] The two not-for-profit organisations are Anglia Ruskin University (n.d.-a). and the HVRT (n.d.).

Table B.4 Overview of ongoing research

Reference	Lead organisation	Research title/short description (when no title is provided)	Start and end dates of research (where available)	Short description	Collaborative and/or supporting organisations (where applicable)	Funded by FiMT?
Anglia Ruskin University (n.d.-c)	Veterans and Families Institute (VFI) at Anglia Ruskin University	Evaluation of Spousal Employment Support Programme	2016-2018	An evaluation of MOD's spousal employment support programme (SESP).	N/A	Yes
Anglia Ruskin University (n.d.-b)	Veterans and Families Institute (VFI) at Anglia Ruskin University	Early Service Leavers (ESL) Scoping Study	Date range unknown	A scoping study to identify what is known about Early Service Leavers, and where the research gaps exist.	King's College London Military Health Research	No
Anglia Ruskin University (n.d.-d)	Veterans and Families Institute (VFI) at Anglia Ruskin University	Maintaining Independence Study	Date range unknown	A study looking at the impact of limb loss on older veterans aged over 40	Blesma, Northumbria University, Military Covenant UK Government funding	No
Anglia Ruskin University (n.d.-e)	Veterans and Families Institute (VFI) at Anglia Ruskin University	National UK audit – veterans in the criminal justice system	Date range unknown	A study that seeks to map the support and services available to veterans through the UK criminal justice system, from first contact with the police to sentencing in court.	Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI) on behalf of COBSEO	No

Reference	Lead organisation	Research title/short description (when no title is provided)	Start and end dates of research (where available)	Short description	Collaborative and/or supporting organisations (where applicable)	Funded by FiMT?
Anglia Ruskin University (n.d.-a)	Blesma	Blesma Families Study	2016-2018	A qualitative analysis of the experiences of the families of veterans who have limb loss, as well as the ways in which they overcome these difficulties.	Anglia Ruskin University Veterans and Families Research Institute (VFI), FiMT	Yes
Sacree (n.d.)	University of Chester	A Mother's Experience of her Son's Combat Injuries: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.	2014 - unknown	An investigation into the psychological and sociodemographic factors that influence a mother's wellbeing during her son's recovery and rehabilitation after he has suffered a combat injury.	UCLan	No
University of Chester (n.d.)	University of Chester	Finding the Forgotten	Date range unknown	A study that evaluates the impact of a particular strategy that is implemented to motivate veterans to register with their GP.	NHS England	No
King's College London (n.d.)	King's College London	VOICE	Date range unknown	A study that explores the role of career choices and the impact of health and wellbeing in later life (after-65). This includes both veterans and non-veterans, and seeks to identify the ways in which military service has a different impact to civilian careers.	Royal British Legion (RBL)	No

Reference	Lead organisation	Research title/short description (when no title is provided)	Start and end dates of research (where available)	Short description	Collaborative and/or supporting organisations (where applicable)	Funded by FiMT?
Kiernan (2016)	Northumbria University	Improving access for veterans: Understanding why veterans are reluctant to access help for alcohol problems	2015 - unknown	A study that aims to understand why veterans are reluctant to access help for alcohol, and suggest strategies that may reduce these barriers and increase engagement in alcohol support services.	Royal British Legion (RBL)	No
University of Salford (n.d.)	University of Salford	Sanctions, support and Service leavers	2017-2019	A project that seeks to detail the experiences of veterans when accessing the UK's benefits system, and examine whether or not these services are appropriate to meet the needs of service leavers.	University of York, FiMT	Yes
FiMT (n.d.-a)	Behavioural Insights Team	Engagement with Service families in transition	2017-2018	A study that applies insights from social and behavioural sciences to identify the ways in which service leaver's families can benefit more from services designed to support military-to-civilian transition.	FiMT	Yes

Reference	Lead organisation	Research title/short description (when no title is provided)	Start and end dates of research (where available)	Short description	Collaborative and/or supporting organisations (where applicable)	Funded by FiMT?
Birmingham University (n.d.)	Birmingham University	Scar Free Foundation Centre for Conflict Wound Research	2018-2021	This article describes a new research centre that aims to minimise the impact of physical scarring among Armed Forces personnel and civilians, including facilitating psychological and social rehabilitation for individuals with appearance-altering injuries after they are discharged from the military.	The Scar Free Foundation, University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, The Centre for Appearance Research (CAR), and The CASEVAC Club	No
Warwick University (n.d.-a)	Warwick University	Pleasure and Performance in Military Afterlives	2016-2019	A study that seeks to identify and understand the experiences that provide veterans with joy, satisfaction and wellbeing, and understand how these experiences link to their experiences in the military.	N/A	No
Warwick University (n.d.-b)	Warwick University	Self-employment among the Armed Forces Community	2016-2018	A study that aims to identify the characteristics and factors that determine successful self-employment, and investigate the unique aspects and ways of supporting self-employment in the armed forces community.	QinetiQ, X-Forces, FiMT	Yes

RAND Europe

Reference	Lead organisation	Research title/short description (when no title is provided)	Start and end dates of research (where available)	Short description	Collaborative and/or supporting organisations (where applicable)	Funded by FiMT?
HVRT (n.d.)	Health Of Veterans' Research Team (HVRT)	Various	September 2017 – August 2018	A number of areas of future research are listed which includes work focusing on the mental and physical health of veterans and the link to military service.	King Edward VII's Hospital, COBSEO	No
FiMT (n.d.)	Bristol University	Signposting domestic violence and abuse in UK military families	2017-2018	A project that aims to improve signposting to service providers who support UK families suffering from domestic violence and abuse (DVA). This includes defining specialist DVA support, then integrating this into the UK Refuges Online resource.	FiMT	Yes
Families Federations (Naval Army and RAF)(n.d.)	Families Federations (Naval, Army and RAF)	Tri-Service Transition survey	2016-2018	A survey that seeks to understand military-to-civilian transition in more detail, including: reasons for leaving, impact of transition on family, challenges to transition, and ways in which transition can be better supported.	FiMT	Yes

B.2. Reviewed literature: Service leaver types and challenges review

In relation to the Service leaver types and challenges review, a total of 57 sources were identified as potentially relevant through the two search approaches outlined in Section A.2, of which 29 were included in the final full-text review. These were included on the basis of their relevance to the research questions, the inclusion criteria outlined in Table A.3, and their quality level ('high' or 'medium' in relation to Table A.2 for academic sources). The sections below provide an overview of the academic literature and grey literature consulted as part of this review.

Academic literature

In total, 20 academic publications were reviewed. Of these studies, 15 focused on the UK,[544] 3 on the United States,[545] 1 on Canada,[546] and 1 on Australia.[547] All of the studies were categorised as being of high quality, apart from one which was of medium quality. Of the 20 studies, 11 involved a qualitative methodology (such as interviews or literature review), 8 involved a quantitative methodology (such as analysis of survey results), and 1 involved both a qualitative and quantitative methodology (interviews and a quantitative analysis of a demographic dataset).

Grey literature

A total of nine grey literature sources were reviewed. These comprised studies conducted by research and policy organisations as well as government documentation and reports, including UK MOD and National Audit Office (NAO) publications. In general, the grey literature reviewed was not based on primary data collection involving military or Service leavers, in contrast to the academic literature. Of the mine sources reviewed, six focused on the UK,[548] two on the United States,[549] and one on Canada.[550]

Demographic information and Service leaver characteristics

Overall, the literature reviewed referred to a wide-ranging demographic of Service leavers, which is illustrated in Table B.5 below. Of the studies reviewed, the population most often represented are British, male non-commissioned Army personnel.[551] The dominance of this specific demographic can be

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[544] Albertson et al. (2015); Beech et al. (2017); Bergman et al. (2014); Binks & Cambridge (2017); Brunger at al. (2013); Buckman et al. (2012); Davies (2014); Elliot et al. (2017); Finnegan (2016); Giebel et al. (2014); Godier et al. (2017); Herman & Yarwood (2014); Kapur et al. (2009); Murphy et al. (2017);Walker (2012).

[545] Ahern et al. (2015); Brignone et al. (2017); Hourani et al. (2012).

[546] Black & Papile (2010).

[547] Oster et al. (2017). It should be noted that this was a systematic review that included studies from most Anglophone countries.

[548] The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (2016); Centre for Social Justice (2014); Fossey (2010); JSP (2017); NAO (2007); Trajectory (n.d.).

[549] Morin (2011); US Veterans Affairs (n.d.).

[550] Shields et al. (2016).

[551] All references to the Army, Royal Air Force (RAF) and Royal Navy/Marines are in relation to the UK Armed Forces, unless specified otherwise.

explained by the fact that the UK military is predominantly made up of male personnel (89.8 percent) serving in the Army (57.7 percent).[552] Of this demographic, the majority are non-commissioned.[553]

A small number of studies[554] also explored other demographic markers, such as marital relationships, educational status, whether the respondent has children, previous issues such as mental health or life trauma, and time spent as a civilian since their transition. However, this type of data was not recorded systematically enough throughout the studies reviewed to be able to draw out trends. Table B.5 below provides an overview of the various participants of the research on which this REA was based (by representation, not proportion).

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[552] Dempsey (2017).

[553] Dempsey (2017).

[554] Such as: Buckman et al. (2012); Hourani et al. (2012); Giebel et al. (2014); and Murphy et al. (2017).

Table B.5 Overview of demographics by representation in reviewed literature[555]

Country focus	UK (21)	US (5)	Canada (2)	Various (1)				
Service	Army (11)	Royal Navy (10)	Royal Marines (10)	RAF (9)	Not specified (3)	Not applicable (11)		
Commissioned	Commissioned (7)	Non-commissioned (8)	Not specified (8)	Not applicable (13)				
Deployment[556]	Yes (9)	No (7)	Not specified (7)	Not applicable (13)				
Years of service	Range: Under 1 year to 45 years	Not specified (7)	Not applicable (13)					
Gender	Male (14)	Female (13)	Not specified (2)	Not applicable (13)				
Age	Range: 16 to over 70	Not specified (3)	Not applicable (13)					
Other[557]	Relationship status (7)	Race/ethnicity (4)	Previous life issues (forensic history, life trauma, etc.) (3)	Employment status (2)	Educational status (2)	Children (1)	Time since leaving the military (1)	Area of residence (county) (1)

[555] The number in brackets refers to the number of studies that included that particular demographic. It should be noted that this number is not necessarily representative of the wider prevalence of a particular demographic.

[556] The definitions vary by study, and include: 'combat exposure'; 'traumatic combat exposure'; 'deployment'; 'served in war zone'; 'deployed to combat zones, areas of operation, or in direct support;' 'experienced some form of combat'; 'combat / non-combat'.

[557] This refers to examples of other categories not included elsewhere in the table and is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

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B.3. Reviewed literature: comparator groups review

Table B.6 presents the final 23 sources for full-text review:

Table B.6 Shortlisted selection of sources for data extraction and analysis

Comparator Group	Author(s)	Year	Title	Country of publication	Method (number of participants in brackets)
Bereavement	Trevino et al.	2017	Bereavement Challenges and Their Relationship to Physical and Psychological Adjustment to Loss	USA	Interview, survey (162)
	Maple et al.	2014	Uncovering and Identifying the Missing Voices in Suicide Bereavement	USA/Australia	Literature review
	Jaaniste et al.	2017	Risk and Resilience Factors Related to Parental Bereavement Following the Death of a Child with a Life-Limiting Condition	Australia	Literature review
	Wendon-Blixrud, P.	2008	The impact of conjugal bereavement on older men's identities	UK	Narrative interviews (7)
Divorce	Amato	2000	The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children	USA	Literature review
	McIntosh et al.	2009	Parenting after Separation	Australia	Literature review
	Goldberg et al.	2015	Lesbian and Heterosexual Adoptive Mothers' Experiences of Relationship Dissolution	USA	Interview (13)
	Sakraide, J.	2005	Common Themes in the Divorce Transition Experience of Midlife Women	USA	Interview (24)
Skilled migration	Ramsey et al.	2008	Counter-productive forces at work: Challenges faced by skilled migrant job-seekers	Australia	Literature review, interviews (23)
	van Tonder, C. L.	2013	Migration as Personal Transition	Australia	Interview (21)
	Fang & Goldner	2011	Transitioning into the Canadian Workplace: Challenges of Immigrants and its Effect on Mental Health	Canada	Literature review
	Siriwardhana et al.	2010	VULNERABILITY and RESILIENCE	UK	Literature review

Category	Author	Year	Title	Country	Method
Prison release	Baer et al.	2006	Returning Home: Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry	USA	Literature review
	Edgar et al.	2012	Out for good – taking responsibility for resettlement	UK	Literature review
Involuntary job loss	Ebberwein et al.	2004	Voices in Transition: Lessons on Career Adaptability	USA	Literature review, interview (18)
	Vickers & Parris	2014	'Your Job No Longer Exists!': From Experiences of Alienation to Expectations of Resilience – A Phenomenological Study	Australia	Interview (10)
	Hallqvist and Hydén (2012)	2012	Learning in occupational transitions: a study of the process following job loss	Sweden	Interview (23)
Loss of strong professional culture	Oakland et al.	2012	Re-defining 'Me' – Exploring career transition and the experience of loss in the context of redundancy for professional opera choristers	UK	Interview (7)
	Smith and McManus	2008	A Review on Transitional Implications for Retiring Elite Athletes: What Happens When the Spotlight Dims?	Australia	Literature review
	Warriner & Lavalle	2008	The Retirement Experiences of Elite Female Gymnasts: Self Identity and the Physical Self	UK	Interviews (7)
Youth leaving foster care	Steffe & Barry	2012	The Challenges in the Transition to Adulthood for Foster Care Youth: A Literature Review	USA	Literature review
	Stein	2008	Resilience and Young People Leaving Care	UK	Literature review
Starting university	Denny	2015	Transition From Second Level And Further Education To Higher Education	Republic of Ireland	Literature review, survey (,1,579), focus group (50)
	McGarvey et al.	2015	International students' experience of a western medical school: a mixed methods study exploring the early years in the context of cultural and social adjustment compared to students from the host country	Republic of Ireland	Interview (29), online survey (467)

Annex C: Expert Workshop agenda

This annex outlines the logistical details, event description and agenda for the Expert Workshop held in London on 28 March 2018 (please refer also to Section 1.3.1).

Event: Resilience and transition workshop

Time: 10:30 – 14:30, Wednesday 28 March 2018

Location: Forces in Mind Trust, Mountbarrow House, 6-20 Elizabeth St, London, SW1W 9RB

Event description: While many UK Service leavers experience successful transitions to civilian life, others face challenges including ill health, unemployment, debt and homelessness. In 2016, the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) ran a consultation on Life Transitions, which identified resilience as crucial to successful transition. Building on this engagement, RAND Europe is conducting a study to help improve understanding of how resilience can affect transition to civilian life experiences and outcomes for UK Service leavers.

As part of the study, this workshop is designed to test emerging study findings and to address existing research gaps. In particular, the workshop has three overarching objectives: (1) support an improved understanding of how UK Service leavers are categorised in participants' organisations; (2) identify the main challenges faced by Service leavers undergoing transition from participants' perspectives; and (3) examine sources of support aimed at strengthening resilience as UK Service leavers make the transition to civilian life.

Agenda:

10.30	Registration opens. Tea, coffee and networking
10.50	Welcome and introductions
11.00	Session 1: Study overview and workshop objectives
11.45	Session 2: Service leaver types
12.15	LUNCH
12.45	Session 3: Transition challenges
13.30	Session 4: The support landscape
14.20	Closing remarks and next steps
14.30	CLOSE