



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

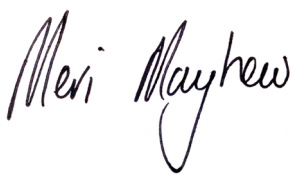
The UK Armed Forces charity sector: a summary of provision

November 2018

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The Veterans Strategy can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-for-our-veterans>

About the Forces in Mind Trust

The aim of the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) is to provide an evidence base that will influence and underpin policy making and service delivery to enable ex-Service personnel and their families to lead successful civilian lives. Registered charity no. 1145688 in England and Wales.

www.fim-trust.org

About Cobseo – The Confederation of Service Charities

Cobseo, The Confederation of Service Charities represents, promotes and furthers the interest of the Armed Forces Community. Its purpose is to maximise the effectiveness, efficiency and influence of the Service Charity Sector in order to positively enhance the lives of beneficiaries in the Armed Forces Community, and it provides on behalf of its members a single point of contact for interaction with Government and all other key stakeholders. Cobseo is a company limited by guarantee – company number 5098973.

www.cobseo.org.uk

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Executive summary

Armed Forces charities are ‘established specifically to support past and present members of the Armed Forces and their families (the Armed Forces community). In this context, an Armed Forces charity must be able to apply this definition to their beneficiaries’ (Cole and Traynor, 2016). The UK Armed Forces charity sector today is a broad and diverse collection of charities, within which the number of charities providing welfare support is estimated at less than 500, supporting an Armed Forces community of approximately 6.5 million people (Royal British Legion, 2014). Along with the rest of the charitable sector in the UK, Armed Forces charities are facing significant financial challenges. They will need to work hard to sustain or improve income and to reduce expenditure at a time when regulatory costs are increasing and public trust is falling. These are among the emerging risks and trends for which Armed Forces charities are already preparing. Levels of collaboration and co-ordination within the sector are good, even exemplary, but collaboration more widely is less common and could offer positive opportunities for all organisations supporting the Armed Forces community in the future.

When support for these beneficiaries is considered by topic e.g. housing, employment, etc., the greatest charitable expenditure is for physical health conditions. This could be because this topic area is so broad, or because many of the 250,000 beneficiaries (Doherty et al., 2018) for this type of support are older and have needs similar to older people in the general population.

While charitable support is available throughout the UK and beyond, different models of support and co-ordination work more effectively for different parts of the UK, and some of these differences are reflected below. One thing common to all UK Armed Forces charities is their dedication in supporting beneficiaries today while working to sustain this support in the future.

Section 1:

Introduction and Methodology

The UK Armed Forces charity sector plays a hugely significant role in supporting the Armed Forces community, both serving and ex-serving, the families of both, and bereaved families. This sector is therefore a vital component of a UK Veterans Strategy. The aim of this paper is to summarise the provision of support from the UK Armed Forces charity sector for the Armed Forces community to help inform the Veterans Strategy, the consultation process and its implementation.

The information set out in this summary paper is based on evidence where available and, although no new research was conducted, feedback from stakeholders is included. Much of the information is taken from a series of 'Sector Insight' and 'Focus On' reports produced by the Directory of Social Change (DSC)¹ and funded by the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT). DSC has carried out extensive analysis of the UK Armed Forces charity sector over the last few years, and this work is continuing with further reports due to be published in 2019. This information is expanded upon from other sources.

¹ The Directory of Social Change (DSC) has a vision of an independent voluntary sector at the heart of social change. Registered Charity no. 800517 in England and Wales, www.dsc.org.uk

Section 2:

Overview of the UK Armed Forces charity sector

This section contains an overview of the UK Armed Forces charity sector, including the number and types of charities, beneficiaries, financial analysis and levels of collaboration.

2.1 Definition

The definition of an Armed Forces charity used in this overview is taken from the Directory of Social Change (Cole and Traynor, 2016):

'Charities that are established specifically to support past and present members of the Armed Forces and their families (the Armed Forces community). In this context, an Armed Forces charity must be able to apply this definition to their beneficiaries'.

2.2 Background

The modern origins of the Armed Forces charity sector can be traced back to the nineteenth century with the Lloyd's Patriotic Fund² founded in 1803 to assist the many casualties of the Napoleonic Wars. SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity³, is the UK's oldest tri-Service charity still in operation, having originated in 1885 as the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association.

From this beginning, the outbreak of the First World War led to the significant growth and expansion of the UK Armed Forces charity sector. In a pre-welfare state era, extra help from the public was certainly needed. Between 1916 and 1920, 11,407

wartime charities were registered (with another 6,492 exempted from registration) including many of today's best-known charities (Pozo and Walker, 2014).

Today the UK Armed Forces charity sector has fewer charities than one hundred years ago (see below). The way these charities operate has also evolved and this will be covered later in the summary.

2.3 The types and number of Armed Forces charities

In its broadest sense, the Armed Forces charity sector can be categorised as follows (Pozo and Walker, 2014):

- a. **Charities that directly cater for the needs of the Armed Forces community, including:**
 - i. **Welfare charities** – for the relief-in-need purposes of the whole Armed Forces community. This can be in the form of services and/or grants to alleviate distress due to financial hardship, unemployment, homelessness, ill-health, disability, old age or other personal circumstances. In 2014 there were 278 charities in this category.
 - ii. **Service funds** – to provide facilities and/or grants to improve the morale, social and physical wellbeing of currently serving personnel and/or their immediate families. In 2014 there were 283 charities in this category.

² <https://www.lloyds.com/about-lloyds/corporate-social-responsibility/charity/patriotic-fund>

³ Previously the SSAFA Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association – www.ssafa.org.uk

iii. **Armed Forces Associations** (including hundreds of local association branches) – to maintain and foster the bonds of comradeship forged in service. Many associations also provide benevolent grants, seek to address social isolation, and other welfare services to their members who are in need. In 2014 there were 82 associations, and 720 association branches, each being independent charities in their own right.

iv. **Mixed-type charities** – to promote the efficiency of the Armed Forces, relief-in-need and fostering comradeship. Activities combine elements of the three categories above as they provide support to the Armed Forces community. In 2014 there were 65 mixed-type charities.

b. **Armed Forces heritage organisations** – including museums, heritage preservation trusts and public memorials. There were 242 heritage charities in 2014.

c. **Cadet Forces organisations** – including the umbrella bodies of the main UK cadet forces as well as hundreds of local cadet force units. In 2014 there were 500 cadet charities.

In 2014 there were reported to be approximately 2,200 Armed Forces charities in the UK. This included those charity types described above, along with 58 Scottish charities (not classified by type at this stage) and 9 charities categorised as ‘other’ (Pozo and Walker, 2014). This figure prompted speculation that there were too many charities, though these claims could partly be driven by a lack of understanding of the huge diversity of Armed Forces charities operating in the sector (the figure of 2,200 applied a wide interpretation of what constituted an Armed Forces charity i.e. all those in categories a-c above). Detailed analysis of the sector since then by the Directory of Social Change (DSC) focused more closely on those charities directly serving the Armed Forces community. For

example, cadet charities⁴ and a small number of heritage charities⁵ which had been included in the earlier figure of 2,200 were excluded in the later analysis when they were deemed not to directly support the Armed Forces community. In their ‘Focus On’ series of reports in 2017 and 2018 DSC stated that there were approximately 1,200 charities supporting the Armed Forces community excluding association branches. DSC will be publishing a detailed, up-to-date breakdown of the number of Armed Forces charities in early 2019, which will also provide an indication of whether the sector is increasing in size, decreasing, or remaining stable.

Charities providing welfare support – in 2014 Pozo and Walker found there were 409 UK Armed Forces charities registered in the UK which were providing welfare support to a potential beneficiary population of between 6.5 and 6.7 million people (Royal British Legion, 2014). This research provided useful context in understanding the ratio of charities to potential beneficiaries, further addressing the suggestion of there being too many charities. DSC estimate the number of Armed Forces charities providing welfare support today is less than 500 and again, their next report will provide a detailed breakdown of the number of charities by type.

2.4 Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of the UK Armed Forces charity sector include serving personnel (both regular and reserve), ex-Service personnel, the families of both and bereaved families⁶. Each charity has its own eligibility criteria to determine whether support may be offered e.g. some housing providers have specific eligibility criteria for clearly-defined groups such as those who are classified as wounded, injured or sick (WIS).

Families – the families of serving and ex-Service personnel are included within the Armed Forces community cohort through this paper and are not singled out specifically. There are several charities and organisations whose sole remit is to support

4 The rationale for excluding cadet charities is that they are uniformed youth organisations that are affiliated with the Armed Forces through their culture and administration alone. Given that cadets do not require a family connection to the Armed Forces to be a cadet, they are not deemed to be a constituent of the Armed Forces community. Cadets are not within the scope of the Veterans Strategy and will not be included further in this summary.

5 Select heritage organisations were removed such as memorial halls now serving local communities.

6 Some charities may also include cadets, and members of the Merchant Navy who have seen duty on legally defined military operations.

the families of serving personnel (and a short period of time post-service in the case of Army families) including the Naval⁷, Army⁸ and RAF⁹ Families Federations¹⁰.

Support for bereaved families – bereaved families are among those identified as having special circumstances and warranting priority support under the Armed Forces Covenant¹¹. There are several charities offering support to bereaved families, and again these families have been included in the Veterans Strategy where appropriate.

2.5 Breadth of support

Armed Forces welfare charities registered in England and Wales cover a geographical area extending across the world. It is estimated that most of the support provided by these charities (92% of charitable expenditure) benefits those living in the UK, with 8% benefitting those residing overseas (Pozo and Walker, 2014).

Support for Foreign and Commonwealth Veterans – there are unique circumstances and issues which can affect this cohort and the UK Armed Forces charity sector supports them as much as it can, sometimes requiring a disproportionately high level of staff resource. A Cobseo Foreign and Commonwealth Cluster¹² was established to help co-ordination, and a service audit carried out by Anglia Ruskin University (Pearson and Caddick, 2018) highlighted these challenges, making recommendations on how these Veterans and their families could be better supported.

UK ex-Service personnel who settle overseas – veterans from the UK Armed Forces settle all over the world and the UK Armed Forces charity sector supports them as much as it can¹³.

2.6 Collaboration and co-ordination

DSC's analysis in 2014 (Pozo and Walker) found that the Armed Forces charitable sector showed greater collaboration and co-operation than other charitable sub-sectors DSC had examined for this research. In particular, DSC found that the grant-making process of the benevolent funds appeared to be highly co-ordinated and flexible in responding to the needs of beneficiaries. In all their subsequent reports, DSC continued to find high levels of collaboration and many examples of partnership-working in welfare provision as well as financial co-operation. The establishment of the Veterans' Gateway¹⁴ is another example of how this high level of collaboration is aiming to improve ease of access to support for those seeking it.

Strategic bodies – several strategic bodies have been established to support co-ordination across the charitable sector, and between the charitable and public sectors e.g. the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board, the Covenant Reference Group, the Service Charities Partnership Board, and the Armed Forces Expert Group. In addition, there are several membership organisations which facilitate and help co-ordinate the work of Armed Forces charities and associated partners in some cases:

- a. **Cobseo**¹⁵ provides a single point of contact¹⁶ for interaction with government, including with local government and the devolved administrations; with the Royal household; with the private sector; as well as other members of the Armed Forces community. The Cobseo Executive Committee includes 8 permanent and 9 elected member organisations whose chief executives are directors of Cobseo. Cobseo formed a series of Cluster Groups (Clusters) in 2009 as part of its desire to enhance collaborative working, and to ensure that issues could be raised,

7 www.nff.org.uk

8 www.aff.org.uk

9 www.raf-ff.org.uk

10 The Naval and Army Federations are registered charities but the RAF-FF is not a registered charity.

11 www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk

12 Information on Cobseo Clusters can be found in section 2.6

13 Support may include advice, guidance and grants, for example.

14 www.veteransgateway.org.uk

15 www.cobseo.org.uk

16 Some of the larger Armed Forces charities also hold independent relationships with these stakeholders in their own right.

solutions identified and subsequent actions taken (or recommended) to implement such solutions. There are 10 Clusters and further information on some of these is included in section 3. Membership of Cobseo is open to charities and other organisations that promote and further the welfare and general interests of the Armed Forces community, subject to fulfilling certain membership criteria. At the time of writing Cobseo has 296 members, with further direct links into several hundred association branches through their parent organisations' membership. Funding is predominantly derived from membership subscriptions. The Cobseo Housing Cluster has demonstrated excellence in collaborative working, as recognised by the 'Working Together' award at the 2018 Soldiering On Awards¹⁷.

- b. Veterans Scotland¹⁸** was established to enhance the welfare of the Veterans' community in Scotland by acting as the prime vehicle for joint working between its member charities; for the dissemination of information to its members; and the co-ordination of joint approaches to UK government, Scottish government, local authorities and other organisations whose business benefits Veterans. Veterans Scotland is a member of Cobseo, and its Chief Executive sits on the Cobseo Executive Committee. Membership is open to all UK registered charities who operate in Scotland, and funding is mainly generated from membership fees and Scottish Government funding. Member organisations of Veterans Scotland are grouped according to their core activity and each group has a committee charged with developing co-operation and new initiatives among the group members. There are currently 4 groups and further information on some of these is included in section 3.

Collaboration at an operational level

Collaboration is also achieved effectively at an operational level when charities work together to provide effective support to beneficiaries. This includes the use of Cobseo's Casework Management System which is used by many of the Armed Forces charities to centrally co-ordinate support to beneficiaries, thereby reducing duplication and meeting client needs more efficiently. In addition, there are groups collaborating across themes to co-ordinate support for a specific cohort of Veterans e.g. the Wounded, Injured and Sick Veterans Employment Group focuses on the combined issues of employment and health for these Veterans.

While good collaboration within the Armed Forces charity sector is frequently cited, as will be shown later in this paper, collaboration with other organisations outside this sector is less common. Better sharing of information and collaboration between the public and charitable sectors forms a core theme in the Veterans Strategy, and there are examples of collaboration involving the private sector which offer an example of future working that could be beneficial to all. Rather than simply providing financial support to Armed Forces charities, providing skilled consultants or specialist professionals pro bono could offer a valuable resource to charities as well as useful insights and experience to private sector employees. An innovative example of this type of collaboration and the resulting benefit to the Armed Forces community is a project in Scotland entitled 'Unforgotten Forces'¹⁹.

Veterans & Families Research Hub (VFR Hub)²⁰ – in order to assist the Armed Forces charity sector (among others) to collaborate in the creation and use of evidence-based information about the Veteran community, the Veterans & Families Research Hub (VFR Hub) was initiated by the [Forces in Mind Trust \(FiMT\)](#), [Lord Ashcroft](#) and [Anglia Ruskin University](#). It is designed to bring people and knowledge together to support statutory

¹⁷ <https://www.cobseo.org.uk/cobseo-housing-cluster-win-fimt-working-together-award-soldier-awards/>

¹⁸ www.veteransscotland.co.uk

¹⁹ Unforgotten Forces is a consortium of organisations which was awarded £4 million from the Aged Veterans Fund to undertake a three-year programme of support for older veterans (aged 65 years and older) and their families in Scotland <http://www.poppyscotland.org.uk/unforgotten-forces>

²⁰ www.vfrhub.com

and charitable organisations to create better targeted and more efficient policies and services, and will assist in developing a better understanding of Veterans' matters across communities.

2.7 Financial overview of the sector

For an analysis of financial data in 2014, the Directory of Social Change (DSC) used the annual income and expenditure figures for each individual charity as extracted from the data feed from the Charity Commission for England and Wales (CCEW) to which DSC has access, and data published on the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) website. The analysis was carried out in 2014, based largely on data for the year ending 31st December 2012 (the financial data was caveated as some of the charities had different financial year ends). A report due to be published by DSC in early 2019 will include more up-to-date figures and an analysis of Armed Forces charities' financial data over a five-year period.

- a. **Sources of charity income and trends (Pozo and Walker, 2014)** – income was broken down into 5 different types:
 - i. **Voluntary income** – resources generated from public and corporate donations, grant funding from other charities and organisations, gifts, legacies and endowments.
 - ii. **Fundraising trading income** – resources generated by commercial trading activities carried out by the charity (or trading subsidiaries) specifically to raise funds e.g. income raised from concerts or lotteries.
 - iii. **Income from charitable activities** – resources generated through activities promoting the charity's objects e.g. income from care home fees in the case of a care home provider.
 - iv. **Investment income** – resources generated from investment assets.
 - v. **Other income** – any other incoming resources not accounted for in the four categories above, including statutory funding where services are commissioned.
- b. **Types of charitable expenditure (Pozo and Walker, 2014)** – expenditure was broken down into 6 different types:
 - i. **Costs of generating voluntary income** – resources spent on generating voluntary income e.g. legacies or grant funding.
 - ii. **Fundraising trading costs** – resources spent on commercial trading activities carried out by the charity (or trading subsidiaries) specifically to raise funds e.g. the cost of organising fundraising events.
 - iii. **Investment management costs** – resources spent on obtaining investment advice and managing the charity's investment portfolio.
 - iv. **Costs of charitable activity** – resources spent on meeting the charitable objects e.g. the costs of providing charitable services to beneficiaries. It also includes the proportion of support costs the charity has allocated to charitable activities.
 - v. **Governance costs** – general costs of running the charity e.g. audit costs.
 - vi. **Other resources expended** – any other resource expended that cannot be accounted for in the headings above.

In 2014 (Pozo and Walker), DSC analysed the income and expenditure of the UK Armed Forces charity sector²¹. The main sources of income were as follows (excluding heritage and cadet charities):

- a. **Welfare charities** – these charities actively seek to raise money from a range of sources. Some welfare charities are primarily service providers e.g. care homes, and a considerable share of their income derives from fees, rents etc. However, many of these charities seek to raise as much additional funding as possible from other sources e.g. donations from the public. They are therefore also fundraising charities.
- b. **Service funds** – these are typically not fundraising organisations, as their income derives to a large extent from charitable activities e.g. charges for services provided or membership subscriptions paid by beneficiaries.
- c. **Associations** – typically, associations rely on membership subscriptions, though they may also receive grants from other Armed Forces charities. Some of the larger associations do seek to raise funds from the general public.
- d. **Mixed-type charities** – these charities are mainly grant-making, and provide an integral package of support to the Armed Forces community e.g. welfare and benevolent grants for relief-in-need. Of mixed-type charities, 86% are connected to corps and regiments of the British Army with a vision of supporting all aspects of corps and regimental life. In the past mixed-type charities did not actively seek to raise funds from the public as they traditionally relied (and to a large extent still do) on regular sources of voluntary income raised via payroll-giving schemes etc. However, some of the largest charities in this group

have started to move towards more active fundraising strategies in the last few years. This has been driven by two main factors: the reduced size of the Armed Forces (meaning a reduction in payroll-giving) and the need to raise sufficient funds to be able to provide for ex-Service personnel who had been affected by conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

At the time of the 2014 report (Pozo and Walker) income and expenditure were analysed by charity type (table 1) mainly based on financial data for the year ending 31st December 2012. DSC will publish a report in 2019 with more recent financial information and a financial overview of the sector. Estimated expenditure by certain themes can be found in section 3 below.

Table 1. Income and expenditure by charity types in 2014 (Pozo and Walker)²²

Type of charity	Income £m	Expenditure £m
Welfare ²³	479	424
Service funds	123	114
Associations (in England and Wales)	23	25
Mixed	32	25
Association branches (England and Wales)	3	3
Association branches (Scotland)	2	2
Scotland (unclassified by type)	55	55
Other	0.3	0.3
Total²⁴	717.3	648.3

2.8 Civilian charities which support the Armed Forces community

The focus of this summary is those charities whose primary purpose is to support the Armed Forces community, but there are many other ‘civilian’ charities which also provide services and support to this cohort as part of the UK population. The literature is unclear on the number of these charities, and how much support they provide. Two high-

21 Based on financial data for 2012

22 It should be noted that as some Armed Forces charities award grants to other charities, resulting in some double-counting of income and expenditure. DSC estimated this to be at least £23 million in 2014.

23 Welfare charities retained £55 million in 2014 for future use, mostly explained by forward commitments of three particular organisations and not indicative of an operating surplus across the board (Pozo and Walker, 2014)

24 This table excludes income and expenditure for heritage charities (income £125 million and expenditure £77 million) and cadet charities (income £30 million and expenditure £27 million) Pozo and Walker, 2014.

profile examples are the Big Lottery Fund²⁵, and the Royal Foundation²⁶. The Big Lottery Fund (although a non-departmental public body rather than a charity) has given grants of over £88 million to support Veterans with programmes such as Heroes Return as well as establishing the Forces in Mind Trust with a £35 million endowment. The Royal Foundation has a strand of work to support the Armed Forces community through activities such as contributing a significant grant to the staging of the Invictus Games. There are many other examples of charities providing support to Veterans as UK citizens such as Citizens Advice and MacMillan.

2.9 Sector trends and risks

Several trends have been identified as they apply to the Armed Forces charity sector (in some cases in common with the rest of the UK charity sector more broadly), both from DSC analysis and from stakeholders' views:

- a. **Shrinking charitable sector** – DSC analysis of the sector showed that the Armed Forces charitable sector contracted in the years leading up to 2014 (Poza and Walker, 2014). In the period between 1st January 2008 and 30th June 2014 the number of charities in the sector reduced by 7%, possibly due to demographic trends resulting in the disestablishment of several local associations. As the number of Veterans continues to decline over the coming decades (although it is believed Veterans will present with more complex needs), it seems likely that the number of charities will also continue to reduce, perhaps through mergers or closure²⁷. An even greater level of co-ordination and co-operation between charities may become necessary to ensure beneficiaries continue to be best served.
- b. **LIBOR (London Inter-Bank Offered Rates) funding**²⁸ – the flow of LIBOR funding which had been allocated to support the Armed Forces community over the last few years has now diminished. The transition to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust²⁹ has provided a more sustainable funding stream for those supporting the Armed Forces community. With an annual disbursement of £10 million, a small number of priorities are identified each year by the Trustees and the Covenant Reference Group. A series of application rounds gives the opportunity for organisations to apply regularly.
- c. **Increased regulatory environment** – an increase in the regulatory environment for charities operating in the UK e.g. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and safeguarding regulation, means an increase in overheads such as staff time and financial expense. Whilst the importance of good governance is not disputed – and is unlikely to diminish – the additional burden to pressed charities gives cause for concern. A review has recently been conducted by the Charity Tax Commission to consider how the entire charity sector is taxed and it is to be hoped that the results will help reduce some of the reporting and financial burden on charities.
- d. **Reputation of the charity sector** – the sector itself is largely dependent on financial support and volunteers from the general population. With an increasing level of media scrutiny and public interest in the charitable sector generally, any damage to the reputation of the charity sector could be costly in terms of future donations and volunteers. Whilst this is a risk facing all charities who fundraise and provide services, when combined with the increased regulatory environment above, it could mean charities spending more time and money on these activities and less on beneficiaries. Cobseo's response on behalf of its members to this risk has been to initiate a series of governance related initiatives to help and support all members achieve the best possible levels of governance to retain public trust.

25 <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/>

26 <https://www.royalfoundation.com/>

27 DSC are currently producing a Sector Trends report containing analysis of the sector profile. This is due to be published in early 2019.

28 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/libor-fines-to-be-used-to-support-military-charities-and-royal-voluntary-service>

29 www.covenantfund.org.uk

Section 3:

Provision by theme

The main areas of support offered by the UK Armed Forces charity sector are covered in this section. These topics are considered by the profile of the charitable support, the beneficiaries accessing support, financial expenditure and collaboration. The topics align where possible with the subjects of the DSC Focus On reports. It is important to note that although provision is presented here by theme, the work of many of the charities within this sector cuts across several themes, working to support those who may have a variety of complex needs. An example of this cross-cutting working was included in section 2 with the description of Cobseo's Casework Management System. Income analysis was not within the scope of the Focus On reports and it is likely that some of the expenditure described in this section is from statutory sources funding the provision of specific services. The expenditure figures in this section are conservative estimates as they are based on survey responses received from the charities providing support under each theme, rather than the whole sector. On a final note about the topics, some are narrower in focus than others and the expenditure may reflect this difference e.g. care homes are included within physical health provision rather than housing, and this may account for some of the difference in expenditure.

3.1 The role of the Armed Forces charity sector

Armed Forces charities today offer a broad range of services and support to the Armed Forces community which can range from enhancing quality of life through to direct assistance and intervention. Every charity has its own vision, mission, aim, as well as eligibility criteria to support a specific beneficiary group or groups. These can be small charities serving a niche beneficiary group, or a very large charity with a broad diversity of services, support and beneficiaries.

In several of the themed areas below, charities stated that they believed they were providing services that the MOD or statutory services did not, or else were providing those services more quickly. A significant number of charity representatives felt their organisations responded to gaps in provision.

3.2 Information, advice and guidance

With such a range of charities providing services to the Armed Forces community, it is vital that anyone seeking support finds the process as easy as possible. Research had found that those seeking help were sometimes unsure which charity to approach and how (FiMT, 2013, Ashcroft, 2014). To make access as easy as possible for those unsure where to turn, the Veterans' Gateway³⁰ was established to provide a first point of entry for those seeking help. The Veterans' Gateway is supported by a large network of organisations directly supporting the Armed Forces community.

³⁰ Veterans' Gateway is made up of a consortium of organisations and Armed Forces charities including The Royal British Legion, SSAFA – the Armed Forces charity, Poppyscotland, Combat Stress and Connect Assist. It is funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund (now the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust) www.veteransgateway.org.uk

3.3 Housing and homelessness provision

The topic of housing support is covered below, and is drawn largely from the relevant DSC Focus On report (Doherty et al, 2018). Further information can also be found in a Housing Snapshot (Bevan et al., 2018) published by the Forces in Mind Trust Research Centre³¹. This snapshot summarises issues relating to housing and accommodation among serving personnel and Veterans, including single people and families. It also sets out policy responses and current structures of support (including charitable provision), presenting research evidence where available.

Sector profile for housing support

DSC research (2018) found 78 Armed Forces charities delivering housing support with a small number of these charities delivering specialist services. Forty-seven of these charities provide accommodation with around 4,700 properties (and at least 10,200 beds across the UK). Twenty of these charities cater solely for disabled or wounded, injured and sick (WIS) Veterans, 9 provide sheltered living for elderly beneficiaries, and 5 provide shelters for homeless ex-Service personnel.

60%³² of these charities offering housing support owned or managed property. Adapted housing (properties designed or modified to improve accessibility for residents with disabilities or physical injuries) was the most common, delivered by 57%³³ of these charities. Subsidised accommodation was the second most common type (delivered by 55% of these charities), offering subsidised accommodation schemes. Supported or sheltered living was delivered by 32% of these charities, while shelter/hostel provision was less common – provided by 11% of accommodation providers (Doherty et al., 2018).

Armed Forces charities offer a range of housing support services in addition – or sometimes as well as – providing accommodation. The most commonly provided service was home repairs

and maintenance (41%), signposting to other organisations best placed to deliver housing support (39%) and housing searches/applications (29%) (Doherty et al., 2018).

Beneficiaries seeking housing support

Recent research from several sources puts the number of ex-Service personnel who are rough sleepers in London at around 2-3% of the London rough sleeper population (Jones et al., 2014). This is a significant reduction from the 20% figure of the mid-to-late 1990s, and has been attributed to reduced outflow from the UK Armed Forces, improved MOD resettlement provision, and better intervention from the Armed Forces charities (The Royal British Legion, 2011). The number of Veterans who are rough sleepers in the rest of the UK is unknown due to a lack of data, although recent research (Quilgars et al., 2018) provides data on the number of Veterans presenting at a range of homelessness services (public and charitable) in the UK.

The 78 charities delivered housing support to at least 11,600 beneficiaries in 2017 (Doherty et al., 2018). This is similar to the numbers accessing mental health services (10,000 beneficiaries), but significantly less than those accessing education and employment support (38,000 beneficiaries), and physical health support (250,000 beneficiaries) over the last year. Relatively few charities (approximately 5) deliver frontline homelessness services (e.g. provision of food and clothing to rough sleepers) which respond to beneficiaries in ‘crisis situations’ (Doherty et al., 2018).

Over half of all Armed Forces charities offering housing support provided accommodation for dependants (52%) and two-thirds (66%) for spouses and partners. In addition, two-fifths specified delivering accommodation for beneficiaries with disabilities or WIS. Almost one-fifth (19%) of charities provided accommodation for elderly ex-Service personnel or those beyond retirement age. Around one third (34%) of charities provided accommodation for homeless Veterans

31 The Forces in Mind Trust Research Centre was established in October 2017 within The Veterans & Families Institute for Military Social Research at Anglia Ruskin University. The Centre curates the Veterans & Families Research Hub, provides advice and guidance to research-involved stakeholders and produces targeted research and related outputs. The Centre is funded by the Forces in Mind Trust www.vfirhub.com

32 Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

33 Percentages may also add up to more than 100 as providers may offer provision in more than one area.

and around one-tenth (10%) provided beds in emergency shelters (Doherty et al., 2018).

Whilst housing support is vital, it cannot be considered in isolation as the causes of homelessness can be multiple and complex. There is evidence of significant overlap between areas of charitable provision suggesting that charities respond to multiple areas of need. DSC research (2018) found that over half of the 78 charities offering housing support also offered at least one other area of support. The most common was physical health support (42% of charities) followed by employment (36%) and education and training (33%). Mental health support was offered in addition by 30% of charities and support to ex-offenders was offered by 19% (Doherty et al., 2018).

Financial expenditure on housing support

The charities who responded to DSC's survey to establish expenditure on housing spent at least £40 million within the last financial year on housing, which should be taken as a very conservative estimate because the survey was completed by less than half of the 78 charities.

Collaboration on housing support

The DSC research (2018) found that 95% of charities undertook some form of partnership, and that collaboration with other Armed Forces charities was the most common form. Partnerships outside of the Armed Forces charity sector were less common as 18% (of charities) partnered with housing associations, 17% with the MOD, 17% with community groups, and 15% with Covenant signatory organisations. To foster collaboration Cobseo operates a Housing Cluster and Veterans Scotland a Housing Group. Collaboration in Wales is facilitated through the Armed Forces Expert Group³⁴ and in Northern Ireland through the Veterans Support Office Northern Ireland.

3.4 Armed Forces charities' education and employment provision

The following summary covers those charities offering support in education and/or employment provision, and draws largely on the DSC Focus On report on this topic (Doherty et al, 2017). Further information can be found in an Employment Snapshot (Cooper and Fleuty, 2018) published by the Forces in Mind Trust Research Centre³⁵.

Sector profile for education and/or employment support

DSC identified 78 charities that made provision for education and/or employment support for the Armed Forces community. All 78 charities in this dataset deliver education support, and 59 of these charities also provide employment support.

Beneficiaries seeking education and/or employment support

At least 35,800 beneficiaries accessed education support and 28,100 accessed employment support in the year 2015/2016. The four main beneficiary groups for which education or employment support was offered were: Veterans (supported by 87% of charities); serving personnel (supported by 64% of charities); spouse/partner and dependants (each supported by 63% of charities) (Doherty et al., 2017).

34 <https://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/safety/armedforces/armed-forces-expert-group/?lang=en>

35 <https://www.vfrhub.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Employment-Snapshot-231018-2.pdf>

Education provision can be categorised into five distinct groups as follows with the percentage of the 78 charities delivering this type of education support³⁶:

- a. **Vocational training** – practical skills which may take place in a classroom environment or on the job and prepares students for a specific trade or job e.g. NVQ or apprenticeship (44%).
- b. **Transitional training** – skills to help Service leavers adapt to civilian life e.g. financial budgeting training (35%).
- c. **Academic learning** – theoretical learning which usually takes place within classroom environments and supports national qualifications e.g. GCSE or degree (31%).
- d. **Professional training** – skills to advance or develop a civilian career e.g. a management course (26%).
- e. **Military training** – skills to advance a Service career e.g. career development or leadership training (8%).

The most common types of qualifications supported tend to be higher level career-orientated qualifications such as degrees and diplomas or vocational awards.

A significant number of charities outsourced employment provision or collaborated with other organisations to support their beneficiaries into employment (64% of charities). For those charities who provide employment support themselves, employment advice (61% of charities) was the most popular service followed by recruitment services (39% of charities). 34% of charities offered paid or voluntary employment opportunities with external organisations (Doherty et al., 2017).

Financial expenditure on education and/or employment support

Overall the annual expenditure on education and employment provision was estimated to be at least £25 million based on data available³⁷. As almost a quarter of these charities support, partner or work with the Career Transition Partnership (CTP)³⁸ it is likely that some of this expenditure is for the provision of commissioned services.

Collaboration on education and/or employment support

The most common form of partnership here was between charities themselves (59% of charities partnered with other third sector organisations). Cobseo operates an Employment Cluster and Veterans Scotland a Support and Employment Group. Collaboration in Wales is facilitated through the Armed Forces Expert Group and in Northern Ireland through the Veterans Support Office Northern Ireland. The next most common form of partnership was with businesses (36% of charities partnered with businesses).

36 Percentages will add up to more than 100% as more than one type of support may be offered.

37 Specific data was not available for all the 78 charities

38 <https://www.ctp.org.uk/>

DSC's research (2017) also explored the extent to which the 59 charities offering employment support engage, adopt and implement government employment initiatives – focusing on the following five popular schemes:

- a. **Armed Forces Covenant**³⁹ – outlines the promise by the nation that members of the Armed Forces community are treated fairly and do not face disadvantage as a result of service. Some people, especially those who have given the most such as the injured and bereaved are eligible for special treatment. Working alongside Covenant signatories was the most popular initiative supported by charities by a significant margin (46% of charities).
- b. **Career Transition Partnership** – the MOD's official provider of Armed Forces resettlement, which provides services to support Service leavers' transition to civilian life, including employment support (24%).
- c. **Defence Relationship Management**⁴⁰ – a single point of contact linking employers with the MOD, offering advice and support on employing members of the Armed Forces community (14%).
- d. **Veterans Employment Transition Support**⁴¹ – a social enterprise that brings together charities, businesses and the MOD to improve employment outcomes for Veterans, employers and the UK economy (12% of charities).
- e. **Defence Employer Recognition Scheme**⁴² – encourages employers to support defence and inspire other organisations to do the same by issuing awards to those which demonstrate support for the Armed Forces community (9% of charities).

It should be noted that charities may work with more than one of the initiatives listed above.

3.5 Armed Forces charities' physical health provision

This sets out the provision of physical health support by the Armed Forces charity sector. In terms of scope, this is one of the bigger subjects and it is likely that the expenditure figure and number of beneficiaries reflect this. Much of this is drawn from the DSC Focus On report on this subject (Doherty et al, 2018).

Sector profile for physical health support

Upon leaving the Armed Forces, responsibility for Veterans' health care transitions to the NHS. Here, the Armed Forces Covenant is meant to ensure that ex-Service personnel are treated fairly, and with priority in a few circumstances. The literature suggests that a relatively small proportion of Armed Forces charities (around 121) support the substantial demand for physical health provision.

The most commonly provided physical health support by charities is recreational activities (41% of charities), adapted housing (38%) and respite/break centres (37%) (Doherty et al., 2018).

Beneficiaries seeking physical health support

According to the DSC report on physical health provision (Doherty et al., 2018) the minimum number of beneficiaries accessing physical health support from Armed Forces charities is approximately 250,000 per year. This is at least seven times greater than those accessing education/employment support, and twenty-five times greater than those accessing mental health support within the same period.

While DSC analysis suggests physical health provision is generally accessible for the wider Armed Forces community, many charities enforce restricted eligibility criteria for beneficiaries e.g. having a specific illness, injury or disability (mentioned by 12 charities), or being wounded during service or medically discharged (6 charities). Most charities cater for a wide range of illness/

39 www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk

40 <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/defence-relationship-management>

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

42 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-employer-recognition-scheme>

injury types, whereas some cater exclusively for one or a small selection of types. 83% of charities make provision for beneficiaries with service-related conditions, whereas 63% provided support to all beneficiaries regardless of service attribution. In contrast, in charities which offer support for neurodegenerative diseases, sight loss and hearing loss, specified provision was open to all beneficiaries regardless of service attribution (Doherty et al., 2018).

Ex-Service personnel with service-related injury/illness were the most common type of beneficiary and the most commonly supported injury/illness type was limited mobility (64%), followed by wounds (61%).

With the UK's ex-Service population being elderly and declining in size (an estimated 49% of Veterans are now aged 75+⁴³) it is possible that many of the 250,000 beneficiaries are older and with needs similar to those of the same age in the general population. The ageing ex-Service population may explain, in part, the huge demand for physical health support.

Physical health services are delivered to beneficiaries in several ways (Doherty et al., 2018):

- a. Physical rehabilitation and prosthetics** – prosthetics services were most commonly delivered through grants to organisations and grants to individuals (50% and 43% of charities respectively) while only a small number of charities deliver prosthetics themselves (14%). In contrast, physical rehabilitation was most commonly delivered by charities themselves (62%).
- b. Nursing homes and respite care** – the vast majority of charities providing respite care delivered the service themselves (86% of charities) and similarly, most of the charities making provision for nursing/care home support delivered the service themselves (61% of charities).
- c. Adapted housing and assistance dogs** – assistance dogs were most commonly provided through grants to organisations (67% of charities). Similarly, over half (54% of charities) providing adapted housing delivered these services themselves. With adapted housing, grants to individuals were also common, delivered by 41% of charities.
- d. Medical equipment and research** – medical research was most commonly funded via grants to organisations (67% of charities), indicating a degree of collaboration between those charities, health authorities, research institutes and universities. Charities providing medical equipment (including mobility aids and hearing aids) mainly delivered these services via grants to individuals (59%).
- e. Sports/fitness programmes and recreation** – both sports and recreation services were most commonly delivered by charities themselves (70% and 67% of charities respectively). Recreational programmes range from casual activities (such as day trips for nursing home patients), to non-clinical activities (such as equine therapy).
- f. Helplines, mentoring and signposting** – advice and advocacy services were most commonly delivered by charities themselves, with 77% of charities offering a helpline, 88% offering mentoring, and 91% providing signposting.

43 Annual Population Survey: UK Armed Forces residing in Great Britain in 2016.

Financial expenditure on physical health support

Annual expenditure on physical health from all Armed Forces charities is at least £103 million (less than half of those surveyed responded). The minimum amount of expenditure dedicated to physical health provision by Armed Forces charities was significantly greater than the amount charities dedicated to both education and employment (£26 million) and mental health (£28 million) within the same period (Doherty et al., 2018).

Collaboration on physical health support

The DSC research (2018) found that the charities delivering physical health support collaborate extensively. Cobseo operates a Care Cluster (for Residential and Care home members) and Veterans Scotland has a Health and Wellbeing Group. Collaboration in Wales is facilitated through the Armed Forces Expert Group and in Northern Ireland through the Veterans Support Office Northern Ireland. DSC did find that collaboration with external stakeholders (particularly the NHS and MOD) could be increased.

The DSC research (2018) also found that a significant number of charities view their service provision as a direct response to gaps in statutory health-care provision. This report also highlights that it is not currently possible to assess whether charitable provision is meeting need because research on health issues affecting ex-Service personnel is generally limited to small test groups.

3.6 Armed Forces charities' mental health provision

This sets out the topic of charities providing mental health support, and draws largely on the DSC Focus On report on this subject (Cole et al., 2017).

Sector profile for mental health support

DSC's research (Cole et al., 2017) identified 76 Armed Forces charities in the UK which provide mental health support for the Armed Forces community. Armed Forces charities delivering mental health support also fall into two categories of clinical and non-clinical services. Clinical services (provided by 14 charities) involve the direct treatment of patients through a registered health-care professional e.g. counselling or therapy administered via a qualified mental health professional or assessment by a registered psychiatrist/psychologist. Non-clinical services do not involve the direct treatment of patients through a registered health-care professional. Non-clinical services (provided by 62 charities) may include residential services, recreational activities, signposting services and self-help groups.

Beneficiaries seeking mental health support

The total number of beneficiaries accessing mental health support is caveated heavily in the literature. The number of beneficiaries reported by respondents of the DSC survey is approximately 7,000 beneficiaries (given the absence of exact data for mental health support from two of the largest charities this figure could be closer to 10,000 beneficiaries). Whether the beneficiary is a Veteran or a family member is not always distinguished, and beneficiaries may access more than one charity for support (Cole et al., 2017).

The most offered intervention or support type is counselling (45% of charities) followed by advice/helpline and recreational/wellbeing activities (jointly at 40%), therapy (30%) and residential programmes (22%).

- **Provision for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** – of the 76 Armed Forces charities which provide support for mental health, 57 of those are providing support for those suffering from PTSD. The main type of charitable provision is recreational/wellbeing activities (24 charities), followed by advice/helpline (19 charities), one-to-one therapy, group therapy and counselling (18, 13 and 10 charities respectively). Clinical provision for counselling and therapy is much higher from clinical providers than from non-clinical providers, whereas recreational/wellbeing activities was higher for non-clinical providers.
- **Provision for depression and anxiety** – the second most common form of support is for depression and anxiety, with DSC finding 43 charities that make provision for those suffering from depression and anxiety. The most common form of support offered was in the form of recreational/wellbeing activities (23 charities).
- **Provision for substance misuse** – DSC found that 33 charities made provision for beneficiaries suffering from substance misuse, of which 10 were providing a clinical service. The most common type of provision made by charities was jointly recreational/wellbeing activities and advice/helpline with 12 charities each.

Financial expenditure on mental health support

Based on the responses to the DSC survey, the overall approximate annual expenditure on mental health provision from all charities is at least £28 million (around half of those charities who were surveyed responded).

Collaboration on mental health support

Partnerships with other charities was the most common form of partnership found, with 52 charities working in partnership with others (see 3.5 for Cobseo Clusters and Veterans Scotland Groups in this area of support). In addition, Contact is a collaboration of military and other charities working with the NHS and the MOD, and operates as a Cobseo Action Group. Contact's aim is to help members of the Armed Forces community access mental health and wellbeing support. This should be the most suitable and best possible support for each individual, when they need it. More generally, 27 charities work directly with the NHS or a local health authority i.e. local area NHS Trusts, and 17 charities were identified by DSC as working in partnership with a university. Collaboration in Wales is facilitated through the Armed Forces Expert Group and in Northern Ireland through the Veterans Support Office Northern Ireland.

3.7 Armed Forces charities' finance provision

An analysis of those charities who specifically offer financial guidance and services to the Armed Forces community has not yet been carried out, although the financial aspect of support is frequently inseparable from the other areas covered by theme in this summary paper.

Grants to Individuals

DSC found in their 2014 research (Pozo and Walker) that in England and Wales there were 130 welfare charities, 56 associations and 53 mixed-type charities awarding grants to individuals for relief-in-need purposes. This included charities providing grants to individuals as part of a broader portfolio of welfare services and support, as well as charities who were exclusively benevolent grant-makers. For the year ending 31st December 2012 SSAFA was the top charity in this group with £18.47 million paid to individuals in need (£12 million of these funds were given to SSAFA by other charities to support individuals being assessed and co-ordinated by SSAFA caseworkers). Amongst charities that are exclusively grant-makers, ABF The Soldiers' Charity⁴⁴ was the top benevolent fund for the year ending 31st March 2013, having awarded £5.27 million to individuals in need.

Grants to Organisations

There were found to be 73 Armed Forces welfare charities (in 2012) awarding grants to organisations to support their work with the Armed Forces Community (Pozo and Walker, 2014). The Royal British Legion⁴⁵ was the top charity in this category with £7.7 million given to other organisations in the financial year ending 31st September 2012.

3.8 Veterans in the criminal justice system

An analysis of the charitable sector provision for those in the criminal justice system is due to be published by the Directory of Social Change in 2019. Anglia Ruskin's Veterans and Families Institute for Military Social Research conducted a national audit of support for Veterans in the criminal justice system service (Cooper et al., 2018) which considered provision from both public service providers and charities. At this stage, the number of charities providing support for ex-Service personnel in the criminal justice system and the nature of that support is unclear, and analysis of the financial spend and beneficiary types has not been conducted. Stephen Phillips' review of Veterans in the criminal justice system (published December 2014) amongst other reports has raised the profile of this area and has also resulted in the creation of several resources aimed at providing more effective support.

Beneficiaries being supported in the criminal justice system

Whilst the number and profile of Veterans in the criminal justice system is not known for certain, the level of research is increasing.

Collaboration in service provision to support those in the criminal justice system

Cobseo operates a Veterans in the Criminal Justice System Cluster, which provides a vehicle for the co-ordination of those organisations supporting offenders and ex-offenders from the Armed Forces community. It was this Cluster which commissioned the audit carried out by Anglia Ruskin University. Collaboration in Wales is facilitated through the Armed Forces Expert Group and in Northern Ireland through the Veterans Support Office Northern Ireland.

44 <https://soldierscharity.org/>

45 <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/>

3.9 Armed Forces charities in Wales

There are some specific points to note about charitable provision in Wales. The main mechanism for collaboration and co-ordination is through the Armed Forces Expert Group⁴⁶. The Expert Group was established to advise on how public services can best meet the Armed Forces community's needs.

The group is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, as Minister for Armed Forces and Veterans. In addition, attendees include representatives from the British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, the three Families Federations, the Royal British Legion, Cobseo, SSAFA, Wales Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee⁴⁷, Hive⁴⁸, the Department for Work and Pensions, and NHS Wales.

3.10 Armed Forces charities in Scotland

There are some important and unique points about Armed Forces charitable provision in Scotland which was analysed in a report by DSC (Cole and Traynor, 2016). The total number of Armed Forces charities identified by this research as being registered in Scotland and directly helping the Armed Forces community as 300⁴⁹. Of these 300 charities, 32 are cross-border charities which are registered with both the Charity Commission for England and Wales and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator⁵⁰. These cross-border charities accounted for 82% of all income of Armed Forces charities registered in Scotland and 81% of all expenditure in 2014 and 2015 (plus broadly similar for earlier financial years). Five of the cross-border charities are headquartered in Scotland, while 27 are headquartered or primarily based in England. The cross-border charities include some of the largest Armed Forces charities in the UK. The evidence does show that in most cases the cross-border charities make little or no distinction between where potential beneficiaries are based geographically, but are solely selected based on their need or former membership of a regiment or

Service. This lack of geographical distinction also means it is not possible to determine what portion of expenditure was spent in Scotland.

It is estimated that 1,800 Service leavers each year choose to settle in Scotland. The most common provisions made to beneficiaries are relief in need (83% of charities) followed by health (16%), education and employment (13%), advice and advocacy (12%) and housing (6%) (Cole and Traynor, 2016).

As covered in 2.6, Veterans Scotland acts as the co-ordinating body for the Armed Forces charity sector in Scotland.

Scottish Veterans Commissioner – the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's role was established by the Scottish Government in 2014. Although not funded by the charitable sector the Commissioner's overarching objective is to improve outcomes for Veterans in Scotland, by engaging with, listening to and acting on the experiences of Veterans, both individually and collectively, and to be an ambassador for them. As part of that, the Commissioner assesses the delivery of public services to Veterans and makes recommendations to Government and others for how to make improvements and remove any disadvantages. The Commissioner produces reports on self-selected themes that look across public, charitable and private sector services. Recommendations from the 5 reports produced since 2014 have been accepted by the Scottish Government and many changes implemented.

3.11 Armed Forces charities in Northern Ireland

Until 2015 there was a lack of robust evidence on the provision of services and support to Veterans and their families in Northern Ireland. In 2015 the Forces in Mind Trust awarded funding over four years to Ulster University to identify the current and future health and wellbeing needs of the Veteran population in Northern Ireland, outline the system of

46 <https://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/safety/armedforces/armed-forces-expert-group/?lang=en>

47 <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/veterans-advisory-and-pensions-committees-x13/about>

48 Hive information centres provide information on behalf of the chain of command to the Service community.

49 This number includes welfare charities, service funds, mixed-type charities and associations.

50 <https://www.oscr.org.uk/>

support currently available to Veterans in Northern Ireland, and identify ways in which this may be optimised. This research is ongoing, but findings and reports have been published from the first stages of this project.

The role of the Armed Forces charity sector in Northern Ireland is slightly different from the rest of the United Kingdom. Understanding the difference in the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant in Northern Ireland helps explain why this is the case (Armour et al., 2017). In Northern Ireland, the equality framework defined by section 75 of the Northern Ireland Order⁵¹ places a statutory duty on public bodies to ensure equality of access and opportunity for all citizens in Northern Ireland. The prevailing interpretation of Section 75 is that to implement the Covenant – particularly the second principle which suggests that there are times when special measures should be taken to support Veterans and families who have ‘given the most’ – would be in direct violation of equality legislation (Armour et al, 2017). This makes Northern Ireland unique in this respect in the United Kingdom.

In addition to the differences around the Armed Forces Covenant, the research by Armour et al. (2017) found that Veterans may not want to seek support from statutory bodies due to concerns about their safety or perceived discriminatory treatment. This concern applies for all areas of provision e.g. housing, health or employment support. In this context, the charity sector may become a Veteran’s first port of call for support which is nonetheless available from statutory organisations. In some cases, charities are therefore direct service providers, sometimes in the absence of the state and sometimes as an extension of it (Armour et al., 2017).

In terms of the profile of the charity sector in Northern Ireland, the registration process with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland began in late 2013 and so is at a relatively early stage in terms of available data. At present, any data on Armed Forces charities registered in Northern Ireland is limited by the lack of comparable regulatory systems and standards to England and Wales, particularly with regard to information in charity reports and accounts. Desk-based research

and direct engagement with key stakeholders in the sector (Armour et al., 2017) identified 19 veteran-orientated charitable organisations operating in Northern Ireland. These charities are registered with the Charity Commission in England and Wales, or the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator. These charities provide a wide range of services in Northern Ireland which directly supplement statutory services, with welfare and financial support being central to many of the organisations delivering support to veterans.

The **Northern Ireland Veterans’ Support Committee (NIVSC)** was established to improve co-operation between those organisations committed to delivering support to veterans. It is an effective forum, established on a voluntary basis for information exchange and sharing of best practice. However, it has no executive role or responsibility. Separately, each of the 11 Local Authorities in Northern Ireland is required by law to elect one of their members to the Council of Northern Ireland Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (NI RFCA), and the role of Veterans’ Champion is now additionally vested in the same individual. To fulfil this wider remit, the NI RFCA established the Northern Ireland Veterans Support Office (NIVSO), a step endorsed subsequently by Ulster University (Armour et al., 2017). Cobseo, in partnership with NI RFCA, then bid successfully for Covenant Funds to develop the NIVSO and to enable it to improve delivery of the Covenant across Northern Ireland. The NIVSO captures the views of the NIVSC, is charged by Cobseo and NI RFCA with oversight and co-ordination of the application of the Armed Forces Covenant in Northern Ireland, and with building the capacity to deliver it. The NIVSO can be consulted by statutory or voluntary enquirers with a view to providing a consensus on Veterans’ issues in Northern Ireland.

While a lack of evidence had made it difficult to fully understand the scope and scale of charitable provision in Northern Ireland, the recently published, and ongoing research by Ulster University is starting to fill this gap.

51 www.legislation.gov.uk

Section 4:

Conclusion

This summary has given an overview of the UK Armed Forces charity sector in terms of scope, breadth of beneficiaries, finances and collaboration. This support was then covered in more detail by theme, along with a reflection of the differences in the four nations making up the United Kingdom. As the evidence shows, the charities collaborate well together and beneficiaries can access a wide range of support and services.

The future holds challenges for the sector. As the number of beneficiaries reduces – although possibly with more complex needs – the sector is also likely to continue to shrink. This may well mean a fall in charitable income, and when combined with an increasing level of regulation, there will be an additional burden on Armed Forces charities. Recognising the vital role played by these organisations to support the Armed Forces community, the Ministry of Defence along with the UK Government and Devolved Administrations should continue to work with these charities and support their efforts as much as possible.

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