

UK Military Veterans' Difficulties in Reintegration and the Road to Imprisonment

Daniel D. Packham

■ **ABSTRACT:** Despite increased research on military veterans, little has examined how UK veterans end up in prison. This study addresses this gap through semi-structured interviews with 35 veteran prisoners, investigating their life courses from childhood, military service, civilian life, and into prison. Childhood difficulties—including pre-service contact with the criminal justice system and experiences of childhood neglect and abuse—shaped the participants' military service experiences and re-entry to civilian society. In-service loss and trauma often led to mental health problems and substance misuse. Most participants regretted leaving the military and struggled to reintegrate into civilian society, citing loss of structure, purpose, and sense of belonging. Unemployment, homelessness, substance misuse, and mental health problems—exacerbated by loneliness and isolation—influenced later criminal offending and eventual imprisonment.

■ **KEYWORDS:** criminal, imprisonment, justice, military, PTSD, trauma, veteran, vulnerability

It is estimated that approximately three thousand former UK military service personnel are currently in prison in England and Wales, making up around 3.6 percent of the total prison population (Ministry of Justice 2022). However, despite increased public, political, and media interest in veterans' welfare in recent years, relatively little academic research has sought to investigate how UK military veterans might find themselves involved in the criminal justice system and ultimately end up in prison. This study seeks to address this gap in the research literature by exploring veteran prisoners' life trajectories, identifying and analyzing recurring and dominant themes in participants' narratives that might have impacted their eventual criminal behavior, convictions, and imprisonment.

This article seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of this prison subgroup through the presentation of veteran prisoners' biographies. It details some of the different, individual life trajectories of veteran prisoners, as well as some of the common features and recurring themes in their life narratives. It presents accounts of early life experiences and how these led to decisions to join the military, including difficulties encountered in childhood such as neglect or abuse. The article then looks at military service, which participants described almost unanimously as a positive experience and expressed deep regret at leaving. The study illustrates some of the reasons for leaving the military which, while varied, often included trauma, violence, and substance misuse. It then considers some of the issues that participants encountered on leaving the military and attempting to adjust back into civilian



society, including family problems, financial difficulties, homelessness, mental health issues, and coming to terms with traumatic experiences. Finally, the study reveals how all of these experiences impacted upon the course of participants' lives and how these individuals became involved in criminal offending and ultimately ended up in prison. While corroborating some results from similar previous studies, it also presents findings which contrast with other previous research.

The Transition from Military to Civilian Lives

Military Identity, Reintegration, and Culture Shock

Identity formation is a complex process influenced by social, cultural, and institutional factors. It involves the internalization of roles, values, and group affiliations that shape an individual's sense of self (Tajfel and Turner 1979). According to social identity theory, individuals derive part of their identity from group membership, which provides a sense of belonging and purpose (Jenkins 2008). Institutions such as the military are particularly effective in instilling this institutional identity among their members.

The process of military socialization instills a collective identity by fostering a strong sense of belonging, discipline, and camaraderie through rigorous training, hierarchical structures, and shared values (Hockey 1986). Recruits undergo a process of depersonalization, whereby individual traits are de-emphasized in favor of collective values, beliefs, and behaviors (Winslow 1998). This transformation is reinforced through rituals, rank systems, and uniformity, creating a distinct "military self" which is further supported by institutional mechanisms that promote solidarity, such as unit cohesion, shared experiences in high-stress environments, and a structured sense of purpose (King 2006). The intense and often prolonged nature of military service necessitates intense investment in one's role and involves close interpersonal social relations that create kinship and camaraderie while also providing benefits such as raised social status (Woodward and Jenkins 2011). All of this serves to shape and redefine an individual's identity to internalize a particular military identity often characterized by pride, professionalism, stoicism, physical strength, mental resilience, and endurance (De Bere 2003; Green et al. 2010; Hockey 1986).

Previous research has demonstrated how dominant, embedded military identities can persist beyond the end of military service and be carried forward into civilian life (Brewster et al. 2020; Burdett et al. 2012; Flack and Kite 2021). Armstrong (2025) highlights how this shapes veterans' perceptions of self, others, and the world around them following military service and has a profound impact on their later adjustment and resettlement into civilian society. On leaving the military, individuals often have to redraw and reshape their entire identity and core sense of purpose to one more suited to civilian life. This can be especially difficult when veterans are attached to, and place high value in, their military role and identity, making it particularly difficult to detach from life in the military and enter civilian life (Binks and Cambridge 2018). This is especially the case for those who have little with which to replace the perceived loss of status and the pride associated with it (Hunniecutt 2022; Romaniuk and Kidd 2018).

Issues with personal identities on leaving the military can be handled in a variety of ways. In researching veterans' transitions from military to civilian lives in Canada,

Thompson et al. (2017) reported that veterans found their military identities challenged in their new civilian lives as they interacted with new social groups with different norms, values, and beliefs, often with adverse impacts on wellbeing. Moving back into the civilian world, service leavers can feel alone, unsupported, un-needed, and directionless, living life without a clear purpose and no longer feeling as highly regarded by society (Armstrong 2025; Tarbet et al. 2021). Veterans can find it difficult to adjust to their new civilian cultural environment, where they encounter a seemingly foreign set of cultural norms and are often unable to relate to civilians who do not share many of their values, beliefs, and worldview (Armstrong 2025; Walker 2012). Likewise, they can often struggle to construct a new civilian identity for themselves that is conducive to their new civilian lives (Binks and Cambridge 2018).

Despite all of the difficulties encountered by many of those leaving the military, the majority of military service leavers do manage their transitions successfully and go on to live successful civilian lives (Armstrong 2025; Moore et al. 2020). To illustrate, McAllister et al. (2015) found that 56 percent of post-9/11 service leavers in the US reported no problems readjusting after leaving the military (see also Morin 2011). These service leavers recognized the existence of their military identity and its limited utility in mainstream civilian society, making a conscious effort to separate it from their present selves and forge new, better-suited civilian identities (Walker 2012). Many veterans even carry forward positive aspects of their military identity, such as self-discipline and motivation, into their environments outside of the military (Ather-ton 2009), emphasizing the benefits of their military service to employers in their new civilian careers (Walker 2012).

Maladaptation to Reintegration

Some service leavers are, however, unable to successfully reshape or redefine their identity as they re-enter civilian society and can go on to experience social isolation and loneliness, leading to difficulties with adjustment and reintegration (Ashcroft 2014; Williamson et al. 2023a; Wilson et al. 2018). McAllister et al. (2015) found that 44 percent of US military veterans reported some type of problem in managing their reintegration back into civilian society following their service. They found that “the resultant strain associated with this reintegration may be caused by an incongruence between veterans’ military identities and their civilian work environment” (McAllister et al. 2015: 93).

The problems that veterans can encounter on reintegration can manifest in a number of ways, with co-morbidity of these problems far from uncommon. These can include unemployment and subsequent financial difficulties (Carpenter and Silberman 2020), which can also compound family problems and lead to homelessness (Fleuty et al. 2021; Rolfe and Anderson 2022); roughly 5 to 7 percent of the UK homeless population is estimated to have served in the UK Armed Forces (House of Commons 2023). Some of those struggling to adjust can also experience mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression or, even more seriously, acute conditions directly related to military service such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), or moral injury (Murphy and Busuttill 2019; Sharp et al. 2024; Williamson et al. 2019, 2023b). It is estimated that an estimated 13 percent of UK veterans have PTSD (Palmer et al. 2021).

Previous research has also highlighted problems of self-harm and suicide among UK ex-military populations (Jones et al. 2019; Pinder et al. 2011), with Sadler et al. (2024) highlighting a higher risk of suicide in UK veterans than in non-veteran UK populations and Kapur et al.

(2009) finding that UK veterans under the age of 24 were three times more likely to die by suicide than their non-veteran counterparts. Veterans can also experience problems with substance misuse, particularly alcohol (Gribble et al. 2020; Murphy and Turgoose 2019). Indeed, Ashwick and Murphy (2018) conclude that UK military personnel and veterans are more likely to suffer from substance misuse problems than civilians.

Many of these difficulties facing veterans after their military service may not necessarily be caused or exacerbated by military service. Instead, it is possible that these could be affected by—or else further worsened by—pre-existing issues or conditions which veterans contended with prior to joining the military. These could include delayed impacts from adverse childhood experiences, such as childhood neglect or abuse, as well as pre-existing substance misuse issues or previously undiagnosed mental health conditions. Previous research conducted on military veterans in both the UK and the US has found higher prevalence of adverse childhood experiences, including abuse and neglect, among veterans and has demonstrated that these experiences can contribute to mental health issues, substance misuse, and other problems in transitions from military to civilian life (Blosnich et al. 2014; Kintzle et al. 2018; Murphy et al. 2020; Turgoose and Murphy 2021). Such adverse childhood experiences, as well as other pre-service traumatic experiences in adulthood, can be risk factors for many of the problems outlined above, regardless of military service.

Ultimately, these myriad problems can compound and lead to anti-social behavior, aggression, and criminal offending (Forbes et al. 2023; Short et al. 2018), particularly in those previously deployed on operations overseas in Iraq or Afghanistan (Kwan et al. 2021; MacManus et al. 2015). These problems can be exacerbated by a persisting military identity characterized by pride and self-reliance, as well as a lack of awareness of available support services or an unwillingness to seek help (Rafferty et al. 2017; Wainwright et al. 2016; Williamson et al. 2019a).

Relatively little research has comprehensively investigated motivations for offending in military veterans, but Wainwright et al. (2016) found that these myriad problems of mental health, trauma, substance misuse, and identity issues often combined and interacted to lead some UK veterans into criminal offending. These findings are further supported by Toole and Waddell's (2023) research with Australian veteran offenders. Wainwright et al. (2016) identified four main groups of reasons that featured in veterans' pathways into criminal offending: pre-service vulnerabilities, including childhood adversity and social deprivation; in-service factors, including operational deployment, alcohol use, and bullying; post-service issues, including mental health problems, substance misuse, and transition difficulties (particularly loss of the "military family"); and a set of triggers to offending, including impulsivity, substance misuse, mental health problems, and an inability to resolve conflict without resort to violence (Wainwright et al. 2016). For those veterans leaving the military and experiencing one or more of these risk factors, the risk of offending is elevated, although Toole and Waddell (2023) aptly point out that the link between military service and criminal offending is not direct and causal but impacted by a range of pre-service and during-service factors.

Veterans' pathways through life and ultimately into prison are therefore diverse and influenced by a myriad of factors, making each individual's story unique. The aim of this study was to identify commonalities in veteran offenders' life narratives and to make sense of some of the reasons why some veterans struggle with reintegration into civilian society following military service and ultimately end up in prison.

Research Design and Methodology

This study took the form of a qualitative-exploratory research study (Stebbins 2001). Such an approach is broadly considered a valid research approach when little is known about the group under study and is useful for developing an evidence base for further development of hypotheses and theories (Babbie 2007; Stebbins 2001). Qualitative research method focused on gaining insight and understanding of a population, situation, or events under study, rather than generating generalizable findings with high external validity. They can provide valuable descriptions of how specific populations interpret their experiences of certain events, contexts, and environments (Casula et al. 2021; Nowell et al. 2019).

The study involved conducting in-depth qualitative interviews with UK military veterans serving prison sentences in England. Six prisons were purposively selected as research sites to ensure inclusion of establishments across different security categorizations: a category D open prison, a category C/D closed prison, a category C training and resettlement prison, a category B training and resettlement prison, and two category B local prisons. Selected research sites included both public and privately run prisons in different regions of England and only housed men.

Study Sample

Stebbins (2001) asserts that validity in qualitative-exploratory research is mostly dependent on the representativeness of the study sample, with appropriate sampling methods such as purposive and snowball sampling necessary to achieve this. Within each research site, participants were therefore selected using purposive sampling methods to ensure inclusion of a range of participants across length of military service, age, offense type, and sentence length. Some additional participants were further recruited in each location through snowball sampling, which had the benefit of including some of those who had been reluctant to disclose their veteran status to the prison authorities. Participants were recruited and included in the study until a saturation point was reached (Casula et al. 2021; Morse 1995), with the final sample totaling 35 participants (see Table 1 for a sample overview).

Participants had served in all branches of the UK military, with more than half ($n=25$) having served in combat roles. Almost half of the sample had been deployed on operations overseas, mostly in Northern Ireland but also in Bosnia, Kosovo, Serbia, Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Iraq. Around one-third of the sample ($n=12$) reported having experienced some form of hostile engagement or other traumatic event (e.g., being shot, discovering a mass grave, witnessing death). Most participants ($n=33$) had served as non-commissioned ranks, 19 as private (or equivalent), and 14 as non-commissioned officers, with only two former commissioned officers present in the sample. The overall length of military service ranged from six months to 21 years, with the majority having left over five years prior to the time of interview.

The study sample was somewhat diverse demographically, with participants aged from 23 to 72 years and coming from England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland. The majority were white ($n=32$), with one participant of Black Caribbean descent and two of South Asian heritage. Most interviewees reported little by way of formal education, with ten reporting that they had achieved GCSEs and/or A levels (or equivalents) and a further four having completed undergraduate degree or higher. Offenses ranged from

relatively low-level crimes, such as shoplifting, to more serious offenses, including large-scale drugs importation and murder. Of those willing to disclose their offense, 13 were in prison for violent offenses (including five for murder), five for drugs offenses (all of which were supply or importation), four for acquisitive offenses (two for pre-planned robbery, two for fraud), four for sexual offenses, and two for driving offenses. This wide range of offenses was reflected in the varied sentence lengths, which ranged from eight months to life. Three participants were serving indeterminate sentences and three were currently on remand pending trial or extradition. Twenty reported that they were serving their first prison sentence.

All veterans included in the study gave their full informed consent to their participation, and the study was approved by the ethics committees of both the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cambridge and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) National Research Council. All interviewees participated anonymously and have been assigned pseudonyms when quoted in reports, presentations, and articles, and any details concerning their military unit or aspects of their service which could risk identification have been removed.

Interview Process

Semi-structured interviews were conducted one-on-one in private and lasted approximately 50 minutes on average. An interview schedule was used to guide the course of the interviews and ensure consistency but still allow other relevant topics and unanticipated themes to emerge (Robson 2002; Rubin and Rubin 1995). In this dialogic approach to interviewing, instead of aiming to extract a defined truth, meaning is instead established through the dialogue and interaction between the interviewer and interviewee (Caddick et al. 2015; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). Interviews followed the course of a chronological life narrative, focusing on the following areas: childhood; life between childhood and military service; life in the military; life between the military and prison; and life in prison. Elliot (2005) emphasizes the importance of gathering, analyzing, and reporting participants' life-course narratives in order to capture their lived experiences and highlight their perspectives and interactions within their social worlds. This approach allowed the collection of rich, in-depth accounts of veteran prisoners' lives, providing comprehensive data for analysis. Interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of participants and the audio recordings were later transcribed verbatim.

Data was analyzed using a reflexive thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke 2006, 2019), combining inductive and deductive elements. Initial coding was conducted inductively, allowing themes to emerge directly from the data without pre-imposed categories (Corbin and Strauss 1990). Concurrently, relevant literature provided a deductive lens, helping to contextualize and refine emergent themes (Noaks and Wincup 2004; Ritchie and Lewis 2003). Themes were generated through a multi-stage process, beginning with familiarization with the data, followed by initial open coding, and culminating in the grouping of codes into potential themes. These themes were then reviewed across the dataset and defined and refined to form the final set of analyzed themes. This approach ensured that both participant-driven insights and theoretically informed themes shaped the analysis of the data.

Table 1. Study sample demographics

Participant	Age	Branch	Role	Service	Operational Service or Combat	Discharge Method	Years between Military & Prison	Offense	First Sentence	Sentence Length (Years)
Lee	40–49	Army	Combat	5	N. Ireland	Voluntary	20	Robbery	Yes	3
Steven	30–39	Army	Combat	4	Afghanistan	Misconduct	8	Drugs importation	Yes	4
Jeffrey	60–69	Marines	Combat	6	N. Ireland	Voluntary	40	Other	Yes	6
Jonathon	40–49	Army	Combat	4	None	Voluntary	25	Other	Yes	4
Peter	30–39	Army	Non-combat	15	None	Misconduct	0	Fraud	Yes	3
Ranjit	40–49	Army	Combat	14	None	Medical	12	Violence	Yes	7 (+IPP)
Michael	50–59	Army	Combat	5	N. Ireland	Medical	22	Violence	No	1 (+IPP)
Phillip	40–49	Army	Combat	4	N. Ireland	Voluntary	20	Violence	Yes	11
Anthony	50–59	Army	Combat	10	N. Ireland and Gulf	Voluntary	18	Violence	Yes	14
David	30–39	Army	Combat	6	Afghanistan and Iraq	Voluntary	4	Violence	Yes	Life
Jack	50–59	Army	Combat	0.5	Afghanistan	Medical	29	Violence	Yes	Life
William	50–59	Army	Combat	4.5	N. Ireland	Voluntary	13	Violence	No	Life
Paul	50–59	Army	Infantry	4.5	N. Ireland	Voluntary	19	Drugs importation	No	5
Arnold	60–69	Army	Combat	8	N. Ireland	Voluntary	37	Drugs importation	No	8
Dennis	50–59	Army	Infantry	8	N. Ireland	Misconduct	22	Declined	No	0.5
Adrian	30–39	Army	Combat	5	Afghanistan and Kosovo	Misconduct	12	Robbery	No	Remand
James	50–59	Navy	Non-combat	3	None	Misconduct	26	Violence	No	Remand
Stuart	30–39	Army	Combat	2.5	None	Medical	10	Sex offenses	Yes	Remand
Karl	40–49	RAF	Non-combat	6	None	Voluntary	19	Violence	No	1
Kevin	40–49	Army	Combat	6	Bosnia	Voluntary	21	Drugs supply	Yes	13
Martin	20–29	Army	Non-combat	2	None	Voluntary	4	Fraud	No	3.5
Richard	70–79	Navy	Non-combat	7	None	Voluntary	38	Declined	Declined	Declined

Table 1. Continued

Participant	Age	Branch	Role	Service	Operational Service or Combat	Discharge Method	Years between Military & Prison	Offense	First Sentence	Sentence Length (Years)
Shaun	60–69	Army	Non-combat	6	N. Ireland	Medical	30	Sex offenses	No	3.5
Matthew	60–69	RAF	Non-combat	12	None	Voluntary	35	Sex offenses	Yes	5.5
Thomas	60–69	Army	Non-combat	5	None	Medical	40	Sex offenses	Yes	12
Christopher	50–59	Army	Combat	11	N. Ireland	Voluntary	18	Violence	Yes	14
Hamish	60–69	Army	Combat	11	None	Voluntary	31	Violence	Yes	12
Edward	50–59	Army	Non-combat	21	None	Voluntary	12	Violence	Yes	11
Andrew	50–59	Army	Combat	4.5	None	Voluntary	23	Declined	Declined	IPP
Owen	30–39	Army	Combat	9.5	Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia	Misconduct	0	Drugs supply	Yes	8
Simon	70–79	Army	Combat	1.5	None	Voluntary	39	Declined	Declined	4.5
Graeme	20–29	Army	Combat	4	Iraq	Medical	5	Other	No	2
Mark	50–59	Marines	Combat	14	None	Medical	25	Other	No	2
Parveet	40–49	Navy	Non-combat	4	None	Voluntary	18	Fraud	Yes	2.5
Timothy	40–49	Army	Combat	10	Kosovo, Bosnia, Kuwait	Medical	16	Violence	Yes	2

Findings

Many of the features of veteran prisoners' life narratives identified by Wainwright et al. (2016) as contributing to veterans' eventual imprisonment featured heavily in the accounts of participants in this study. While acknowledging that each participant had his own story of how he ended up in prison, with no two accounts being the same, there were some broad similarities across participants' accounts in many areas. The following analysis explores the life stages of the ex-military personnel, laying out their journeys from childhood to prison. This serves to elucidate the life experiences of veterans prior to imprisonment. It breaks down life narratives into distinct, chronological life stages: upbringing and motivations for joining the military; military service; life after military service; and criminal offending leading to imprisonment, all of which had important implications for interviewees' routes into prison.

Upbringing and Motivations for Joining

Troubled Childhoods

Not all interviewees had encountered substantial difficulties in childhood, with many describing relatively stable upbringings replete with friends, school attendance, and normal family relationships. However, around a third of the study participants did describe difficult or troubled childhoods, echoing findings by Toole and Waddell (2023). These troubled childhoods often featured problems with school attendance and behavior, including low academic attainment, suspensions and expulsions, and occasionally criminal behavior which brought them into contact with the police and the criminal justice system:

I didn't like school. I'm not going to lie, I was a naughty one because I wasn't really interested in school. All I wanted to do was join the Marines. That's it ... we'd get in trouble with the police a few times but not a great deal... Fighting, smashing windows, fucking vandalism. Things like that. That was it. (Jonathon)

As found by Wainwright et al. (2016), some participants who had experienced troubled backgrounds described joining the military as a means to escape from environments in which they felt they would get into more serious trouble if they remained. Joining the military was seen as a way to avoid ending up in prison:

It was either come here [prison] or go into the military ... [After school] I bummed around doing odd jobs. A bit of drug dealing. A bit of this, a bit of that ... Just minor things. Well, I say minor things, assault, robbery. Stupid little things. Not going to school. Breaking into people's shops. Things like that. It was a case of if I don't join the army, I'm going to end up in the prison system. And just thought, you know what, I'm tired of this. Join the army, see a bit of the world, do a bit for Queen and country. Travel a bit. (Anthony)

Childhood Neglect and Abuse

Many participants' accounts of their childhoods featured neglect and abuse at the hands of parents or guardians, and these experiences clearly shaped participants' formative years and subsequent lives. Those participants who had grown up in the care system also recounted traumatic abuse:

... we [my sister and I] were very close as we spent five years together in [care home] ... There was a lot of abuse. It was really bad. Kids were beaten all the time ... it was, without exaggeration

it was brutal ... the abuse we used to get– sexual abuse I never had to go through but I experienced my younger sister going through it. Some of the “uncles” and “aunties” would come into the rooms and take the children out and you knew what was happening ... yeah, bad bad experiences. Really bad experiences. (Jeffrey)

These forms of neglect or abuse were often contributing factors behind decisions to join the military. Participants described themselves as being a burden on their family, being left to their own devices or not really feeling part of a family unit. They often described childhood circumstances in which they did not feel they had been equipped with the knowledge, skills, or ambitions that might otherwise have been provided in more supportive childhood settings. Joining the military was therefore often a means to escape undesirable home circumstances. For others, the military simply presented an opportunity to remove themselves from a disruptive environment, as Karl explained: *“I was in care from age 11 until I left school and then met an ex-army lad in my first job and realized I should get away and join the forces.”*

Participants who had been brought up in the state childcare system invariably described joining the military as an easy and natural progression. Having been raised in formal institutions where life was routinized and activities were largely organized by others in charge, many felt that they were not prepared for independent life in society and that the military provided the familiarity and reassurance they sought on leaving their care institutions. Having been institutionalized in the care system, the military was a familiar institution, whose terms and expectations were already largely understood, as Karl continued: *“Maybe being in [care] homes, being in the military, being in prison, it’s all sort of a bit the same. A bit of an institution really. I suppose my whole life has been a bit like that. One has prepared me for the other.”* Often this was coupled with a desire to escape abuse or to move away from environments in which participants had been previously abused:

I didn’t have the best of upbringings. I was, err–. I stayed away from the house as much as possible from a young age. I guess from the age of about nine or ten onwards I’ve been very much independent. My mum was an alcoholic. I was sexually abused by her and she’d beat me on a day-to-day basis, along with my father ... The military was, and still is my family. (Michael)

As alluded to by Michael, above, for many men from such backgrounds, the military provided a feeling of purpose and belonging which had been absent in their childhood, as Jonathon also explained: *“Before I went in. I had no life at all and then I joined the forces and that was it. The first time in my life I had something.”* Some participants like William described this belonging in terms of family which they had previously longed for: *“I loved it, yeah. It felt like for what was the first time in my life I’ve got family.”*

Family, Duty, and Patriotism

A smaller number of interviewees described their motivations for joining the military as deriving from being raised in a military family, by parents who were serving or former military personnel and who had influenced and encouraged them to enlist:

... my proper– my biological father died when I was about five and then my step-father stepped in and he was ex-military. He was XXX Regiment and he was Sergeant Major in the XXX Regiment. So basically he– I wouldn’t say he pushed me but he encouraged me into the army. (Christopher)

Despite many life narratives featuring forms of neglect, abuse, and family pressure, some participants had decided to join the military for more conventional reasons. This included,

for example, Jeffrey's desire to test himself: "*I joined for the challenge and I joined the Marines because I wanted to be the best. It was the Commandos.*" Or else to pursue a legitimate and meaningful career in the absence of other opportunities and to advance socially from a poor and disadvantaged background, as had been the case with James: "*I was working odd jobs and I wanted to do something else in the world. Something a bit more exciting so I joined up.*"

While only cited by a small number of interviewees, patriotism was also a contributory factor in the decision of some participants like Christopher: "*When I joined the military, I signed up for Queen and country.*" Despite participants' various backgrounds and different motivations for joining the military, one consistency across all participant accounts was the positive experience of military service that each participant recounted.

Military Service

Participants overwhelmingly and consistently expressed positive sentiments about their time in the military, recounting how much they enjoyed the challenge that military roles brought them and the camaraderie they shared among their peers. All participants, without exception, remembered this time with fondness, even when they had suffered very traumatic experiences. In contrast to findings by Wainwright et al. (2016) which found veteran prisoners to have been victims of bullying during military service, all 35 interviewees in this study described fitting in well in their military units. Participants recounted few problems settling into the routine of military life and into the social structure of their institutions, as Michael explained: "*made good friends. We all stuck together and we had some good times.*" Furthermore, Kevin's response to questions regarding his service typified participants' responses: "*You know what, I absolutely loved it ... there is absolutely nothing about the Marines that I didn't like.*"

This was especially true for those who had grown up in the care system, who described how they had become immediately accustomed to life in the military and did not suffer from the problems experienced by some of the other young men on entry, such as homesickness and difficulties adapting to a defined and structured routine:

I grew up in care ... A lot of the guys when we was in training had difficulty. Obviously home sickness and everything but I never suffered from any of that. That didn't affect me at all ... I was kind of used to- the culture of it was normal to me. (Lee)

In-service Difficulties

For some participants, military service had been relatively trouble-free and was not reported to have resulted in any lasting impact on later life as a civilian. However, many others did experience problems while in the military, including excessive use of alcohol, engagement in violence, and experiencing traumatic events, which echoes findings from other previous research (Forbes et al. 2023; Gribble et al. 2020; Wainwright et al. 2016). Having problems with alcohol abuse was the most common problem cited by participants:

I did enjoy [the military] but got the drink on me ... I was alcoholic ... I was getting in all sorts of scrapes and so I was asked to put my papers in ... I loved the military. I deeply regret that I couldn't get rid of the demon drink. (William)

Echoing findings from MacManus et al. (2015) and Wainwright et al. (2016), problems with alcohol commonly co-manifested with violence, often leading to disciplinary and criminal proceedings by the military:

I got done for fighting in the Falklands with another guy in the RAF. We were playing cards for money and drinking a lot ... He ratted me out to the RAF police in Port Stanley. I just got fined by the CO or something. (Karl)

Loss and Trauma

While the majority of those who encountered problems in the military engaged in alcohol abuse and violence, others were affected by having experienced traumatic events, which they described as having had a lasting impact on their wellbeing and mental health, such as Anthony's experience of losing a friend: *"One of my mates got killed. We all used to go drinking together. He was a good lad, he was. Dave Jones his name was.¹ Got shot in the back of the neck."* This echoes findings by Williamson et al. (2019b), who found that trauma exposure had long-lasting effects among UK veterans.

Issues with alcohol, drugs, violence, and trauma sometimes led to the end of military service, either voluntarily or through being forcibly discharged. This most commonly occurred as a medical discharge due to alcohol misuse or mental health problems, as happened to Michael: *"After the death of my friend who was killed on a patrol, I started drinking more than normal and eventually they had to give me a medical discharge."* Or otherwise as part of criminal proceedings emanating from drug use or violent offenses committed while under the influence of alcohol, as was the case with Adrian: *"I got a dishonorable discharge ... I got in a fight with someone and then I went to Colchester and got discharged."* These patterns and events generally had lasting effects on individuals.

Voluntary Discharge and Regrets

While a number of participants described being forcibly discharged from the military, the majority had left the military voluntarily for more conventional reasons, as Kevin explained: *"I thought it would be best to come out while I was still young enough to do something else."*

For several participants, leaving the military was a rational decision to pursue other career opportunities, as they had come to feel that the military no longer suited their goals. As Hamish explained: *"I just decided to leave. Wanted to do something different. So, I went to do youth work and then to attend university"* Regardless of their reasons for leaving, participants overwhelmingly regretted their decisions to leave the military, expressing wishes that they had stayed in the military for longer than they had: *"I enjoyed it. Really enjoyed it. Worst thing I ever did was come out ... I'm happy I joined, I was sad when I left. I wish I'd never left"* (Jonathon). For many, the decision was taken for family reasons, often due to a partner wanting them to leave: *"I got married and— It wasn't really for her ... she wasn't really happy with it. I'd been in six years and thought, 'well it's time to do something else now' (Karl).*

Medical Discharge

A small number of interviewees had been discharged from the military on medical grounds, following injuries sustained during their military service:

I was shot in Kosovo. Three times ... and that's when my time ended. That's because I was shot in the leg. I was shot in the back twice. It came out the front. That's the exit wound [pulls down shirt to reveal scars on chest and back] ... And I was shot in the leg where I now have titanium. From ankle to knee.

Curiously, however, and also in contrast with the findings of Wainwright et al. (2016), very few veterans recounted leaving the military as a result of mental health problems and none reported being discharged medically on mental health grounds. Although it is possible that undetected

mental health problems could have been present in some of those discharged for other reasons such as alcohol addiction or violent behavior.

Release from the Military and Entry to Prison

On leaving the military, some participants had settled into civilian life without problems and were able to obtain civilian employment, which ranged from ambulance driving, youth work to crane operating and plumbing. Many of these individuals described the adjustment from military to civilian life as not easy but often manageable, in terms similar to Jonathon: “*I just moved on. I wasn’t there anymore, I just moved on ... I just got on with it.*”

Difficulties on Re-entry

Yet, reflecting findings from previous research (see Williamson et al. 2023a; Wilson et al. 2018), many participants reported that adjusting to civilian life had been a challenge. This included participants who had reported no problems during their military service and was particularly prominent among those who had served on operations in overseas conflicts. As Lee recounted: “*No major issues at school ... [In the military] I was never in any trouble ... And it was when I left that I got into difficulties. That’s when all my troubles started for me.*” The problems encountered by participants after leaving the military were often related to difficulties in adjusting to a way of living that was unfamiliar and with an absence of supporting institutional structures. As a result of such difficulties, many interviewees described feeling lost or adrift, unable to settle effectively into civilian society. As Christopher had found: “*It was hard ... I just couldn’t settle into it for years. I was lost basically.*”

Such feelings of loss, which Jeffrey reiterates, typically went beyond institutional structures and routines and extended to loss of close social relationships with trusted peers: “*I felt lost. Because you get used to that environment, and the camaraderie, and the mates.*”

This feeling of being lost or adrift was often exacerbated by feelings of disconnect between a former military life and civilian life, as well as an inability to shift from an entrenched military mindset back to a mindset more conducive to civilian life: “*I don’t think I’ve switched off. I’m still in that same state of mind as I was in the army*” (Adrian). This inability to reconnect with the civilian world included an inability to appreciate a seemingly mundane civilian life:

It was so difficult to adjust. It wasn’t so much paying bills and stuff like that. It’s because I had no structure and I had nothing to— I wouldn’t say that I was waiting for somebody to tell me what to do, but I just didn’t know what to do with myself and I couldn’t find anything that was interesting me. I couldn’t find anything that was tying me down to a place so I just found it very easy just to up sticks and move to the next place... I just found it so difficult to adjust ... I don’t know whether it’s the humdrum of civilian life. It was quite boring. I just thought, “Jesus! This is no way to live your life.” (Lee)

These feelings of detachment from the military world and an inability to relate to the civilian world extended to the people encountered in civilian society. Many participants experienced an inability to relate to civilians who did not share their outlook and view of the world:

I’ve never had mates like them again. I haven’t got anyone that I would call a friend now. I still call the lads up from time to time. They’re close friends. They’ll always be close friends. The ones I’ve met outside [the army] are just acquaintances as far as I’m concerned. You know what I mean? I’ll never get as close to people as they were. We had each other’s back and that. (Christopher)

Homelessness, Substance Abuse, and Criminal Offending

Echoing findings from previous research (see Ashwick and Murphy 2018; Fleuty et al. 2021), for a number of participants the inability to resettle into civilian society and related problems of substance misuse and feelings of being lost or adrift led to homelessness and rough sleeping, as Michael found on leaving the army: *“Once I left the army I came here to mainland UK. The alcohol was getting considerably worse. During the first part of the 80s I was drifting around the UK. I was totally homeless. I spent some time sleeping in a cave for nine months between Dover and Folkestone.”*

Notably, two participants who were involved with organized crime groups prior to military service returned to these organizations immediately following their military service. These organizations had formal hierarchies, clear goals, strong camaraderie between members, and an appreciation for the skills held by participants which had been gained in the military, such as discipline, motivation, courage, organization, and the willingness and ability to employ violence. In this respect, the structures of these organizations aided the transition from military to civilian life, but also involved criminal offending: *“Came out and got back involved with the wrong people, doing the wrong thing. Then I ended up getting sentenced in 1989 to five years imprisonment”* (James). Membership of such groups also provided those valued and longed-for aspects of military life which had been so appealing. These veterans felt a sense of purpose, belonging, and renewed social status and pride in themselves, even if this was on the other side of the law.

Some of those who ultimately failed to settle into civilian life resorted to alcohol and drug use as a response to managing the process of change and transition, a phenomenon previously documented in veteran prisoners by Howard League (2011). This often led to a downward spiral of behavior which, in some cases, led directly to criminal offending: *“So I came back here towards the end of '96 and I went back drinking again, you know. And then that led to a load of crime; shoplifting, ABH, GBH. Fighting in pubs, on the street”* (Michael).

Emergence of Trauma

For some, this inability to adjust and reintegrate successfully into civilian life was a direct result of trauma experienced in the military which for some, like Dennis, had led to PTSD: *“I suffer pretty bad with PTSD myself. I think there's a total lack of empathy or understanding.”* It seemed that, for some of those affected, effective treatment had not been provided prior to discharge and there was a sense that those outside of the military family could not understand or relate:

Talking to a civvie and talking to someone in the military is totally different because they haven't got an understanding of what you've gone through. Yeah, they can show empathy and all that but they haven't got an understanding. You know, speaking to a civilian about seeing someone splattered or- you know... they don't realize about the smell, about what you've seen and how it affects you. I can't eat bacon. It makes me sick. Bacon and gammon because it reminds me of flesh. (Owen)

As a consequence, some participants had used alcohol and drugs to mask the symptoms of trauma or to self-medicate:

When I came out of the army, I was struggling a hell of a lot. I turned to alcohol and cocaine to forget about things. I couldn't sleep at night. And I couldn't speak to someone. I was too embarrassed to speak to someone to tell them that I was suffering and I tried to take my own life because of this. I couldn't cope. My head couldn't cope with it. I didn't want to speak to my family because I didn't want them to see me and perceive me as being weak because I was suffering. (Owen)

For some, the substance misuse and symptoms of trauma experienced following military service contributed to further problems with violence (see MacManus et al. 2015). Sometimes this was expressed through interpersonal violence in drinking establishments or else manifested as serious domestic violence, echoing findings by Toole and Waddell (2023):

I kept having full blown, sweating, crying, nightmares, going for walks, I just wanted to be by myself ... Then I started drinking and then I'd come home and start smashing things ... gradually it was downhill from then on. Went the doctors, two suicide attempts ... was put in a mental health ward in XXXX University hospital. Came out of there e... then I assaulted my wife and came to prison. First time I've ever been to prison in my life. (Edward)

As these extracts illustrate, for many veterans it was apparent that vulnerabilities or disruption caused by the transition from military to civilian life had been an influencing factor in their later offending, if only indirectly. Despite this, however, participants almost unanimously asserted that their offense was not a result of their military service. For example, Michael, who had experienced the death of a friend during his military service, resorted to alcohol in an attempt to cope with this traumatic loss. He was ultimately discharged as a result of this and became homeless before starting to offend. While a link can be drawn between Michael's experiences in the military and his ultimate criminal offending, he insisted that these two aspects of his life were unconnected:

Researcher: *Do you think your time in the military is any way linked to your offense?*

Michael: *Nah, not really.*

Researcher: *But I guess you could argue that if those earlier things didn't happen, like losing your friend, resorting to alcohol and all that, you might have gone down a different path.*

Michael: *Well yeah, maybe. But that's not the army's fault, is it? I'm responsible for my own behavior, aren't I. They didn't make me come in here.*

For other participants who also claimed no connection between their military service and their offense, indirect links between the two were sometimes discernible. As noted above, for example, on return to civilian life, a small number of participants had gone on to join (or rejoin) organized criminal groups where the skills and capabilities they had developed while in the military were regarded as useful assets which helped them to work well within organized crime groups. As Steven described: *"It's not all that different really, to be honest. Well it is a bit ... but those same things that make you a good soldier are what help you to survive in this business too."* While such experiences were only recounted by a very small minority of participants, they demonstrate how indirect links between military service and criminal offending can be seen, with issues of status, purpose, and belonging playing into the narratives of veterans drawn into such groups.

Despite such narratives demonstrating certain links between military service and criminal offending, many accounts of veteran prisoners resembled those of non-ex-military persons, with crimes often having been committed many years—often decades—after the end of military service and with no obvious links between these periods of life.

Conclusions

The findings from this study present insights into the life pathways of military veterans, from early life through their military service and ultimately to their engagement with the criminal

justice system and eventual imprisonment. While the early life experiences of the veterans varied, some had encountered problems in school and even had contact with the criminal justice system during childhood. Furthermore, although the majority described largely trouble-free childhoods, it is notable that many participants recounted childhood experiences of abuse and neglect, both at the hands of parents at home and in state care institutions. Previous research has demonstrated a high prevalence of such adverse childhood experiences among military veterans (Murphy et al. 2020; Turgoose and Murphy 2021) and such experiences might be expected to have impacted on the later life outcomes of such individuals regardless of military service. This is especially so for those brought up within state care institutions, as illustrated by Gooch et al. (2022) who highlight the connection between care home upbringings and imprisonment among men in prisons in England. The findings in this study support this evidence, with such experiences forming an important part of many participants' narratives, influencing their decisions to join the military and then later shaping their experiences of military service and life after service.

Motivations for joining the military varied across the sample, ranging from a desire to escape poverty or difficult family or care home environments to family pressure, a desire for adventure, or just a means to avoid criminality and eventual imprisonment. It is remarkable, however, that, regardless of motive, all participants framed their military service as an overwhelmingly positive experience, even those who, during their service, were traumatized, bereaved, and even badly injured or permanently disabled. Participants typically described how they enjoyed their military service, fitted in well with the regimented way of life, and had good relationships with peers. This was especially the case for those participants previously institutionalized in state-run child-care institutions who often described the military as something as a natural next step in their institutional journeys. These findings contrast with those of Wainwright et al. (2016), whose research sample of veteran prisoners did not all have positive reflections of their time in the military, with substantial evidence of victimization and bullying during military service. Furthermore, this study did not reflect Wainwright et al.'s (2016) findings, in which half of the study sample had received discharges from the military as a result of mental health problems. Rather, the majority of participants in this study had left the military voluntarily, often citing family reasons or a desire to embark on a new civilian life. Although it is worth noting that a substantial number of participants had been discharged for offenses or for substance misuse problems, both of which could indicate underlying mental health issues.

Regardless of interviewees' reasons for leaving the military, many had not experienced smooth transitions to civilian lives. As a result of military service, problems with reintegration back into civilian society were commonplace, with loneliness, homelessness, substance misuse—particularly alcohol—and mental health problems far from uncommon, echoing findings from previous research (see Fleuty et al. 2021; Murphy and Busuttill 2019; Rhead et al. 2022). Such difficulties in adjustment to civilian society following military service resulted in an array of difficulties and maladaptations. As service leavers were severed from their previously collective military lives full of meaning, purpose, and comradeship, they often struggled or altogether failed to adapt to their new civilian lives, which they considered to be somewhat mundane, individualistic, and lonely. Armstrong (2025) highlights many of these difficulties that veterans contend with on re-entry to civilian society following their military service, even among those who ultimately manage this transition successfully. These feelings were evident across the sample in this study, even among those who had ultimately made their transition from military to civilian life successfully before later committing criminal offenses.

For some participants it was these difficulties in reintegration, interwoven with issues of substance misuse and mental health concerns, which had ultimately led to their criminal offending. A small number of participants even revealed deliberate, arguably rational decisions to join and

work within organized crime groups where they found a sense of renewed social status, life purpose, and cohesion with peers which they felt they had lost on leaving the military. Nevertheless, participants' accounts placed high emphasis on personal responsibility for their offending, typically dismissing the role of previous military service in their ultimate criminal offending and denying links between the two. While this study did not reveal simple direct, causal links between military service and criminal offending—echoing research findings by Toole and Waddell (2023) among Australian veteran offenders—it did reveal a relationship between pre-service, during-service, and post-service factors which can interact to influence later offending behavior. This demonstrates indirect links between military service and criminal offending that can ultimately lead some UK veterans into prison.

This article has outlined some of the typical routes through which veterans in this study entered prison, highlighting a number of commonalities across participants' life narratives. Through the use of in-depth qualitative interviews, it has illuminated the experiences of an under-researched group within the UK criminal justice system, detailing the life narratives of UK veterans who ultimately ended up in prison. An understanding of these pathways provides insight into how military service can shape the life experiences of service personnel following their return to civilian society and can, in some instances, ultimately lead to criminal offending and eventual imprisonment. It also illuminates the relationship between certain childhood experiences and both the motivations for joining the military and for engaging in future criminal offending following military service.

These findings highlight possible areas of need for service provision and intervention for policy-makers and practitioners working with veteran groups, who might benefit from assessing the early life experiences of veterans seeking support rather than focusing on in-service factors.

This study contributes to the limited body of research evidence on UK veterans in the criminal justice system. The study's findings confirm and corroborate some findings from previous research on UK veterans' reintegration and ultimate involvement with the criminal justice system, while starkly contrasting with others. This highlights the need for additional research in this area to further our understanding of this under-researched group with particular vulnerabilities and needs. Such knowledge is vital to addressing some of the issues facing veterans at risk of entering the criminal justice system and for the development of interventions and service provision to assist veterans before and after involvement with the criminal justice system. This study is just one small contribution to this picture to which I hope further research will contribute.

■ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Professor Ben Crewe for his supervision of the doctoral research study which gave rise to the findings presented here. Thanks also to the Dawes Trust, whose support funded the doctoral research study which resulted in the findings presented in this article. This research study was funded by the Dawes Trust through the Dawes Trust PhD studentship.

■ **DANIEL PACKHAM** is a researcher at the Swedish Defence University. He completed his PhD in criminology at the University of Cambridge in 2022. Prior to this he spent 10 years in operational roles in the British Army and UK policing, followed by a further 10 years in research positions in UK government, most recently with the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). His research interests include international security,

military sociology, criminal offending in veteran populations and civil–military relations.
 Email: Daniel.packham@fhs.se; ORCID: 0009-0003-0443-0286

NOTES

1. Pseudonym used to protect the participant's identity.
2. Colchester refers to the Military Correctional Training Centre (MCTC) located in the town of Colchester.

REFERENCES

- Armstrong, Emma. 2025. *British Army Veterans' Experiences of the Transition into Civilian Life: An Ultra-realist Perspective*. New York: Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9781003493495.
- Ashcroft, Michael. 2014. *The Veterans Transition Review*. London: UK Parliament. <http://www.veteran-transition.co.uk>.
- Ashwick, Rachel, and Dominic Murphy. 2018. *Reviewing the Efficacy of Case Management for Veterans with Substance Misuse Problems*. London: Combat Stress.
- Atherton, Stephen. 2009. "Domesticating Military Masculinities: Home Performance and the Negotiation of Identity." *Social and Cultural Geography* 8: 821–836. doi:10.1080/14649360903305791.
- Babbie, Earl. 2007. *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Binks, Eve, and Siobahn Cambridge. 2018. "The Transition Experiences of British Military Veterans." *Political Psychology* 39: 125–142. doi: 10.1111/pops.12399.
- Blosnich, John R., Melissa E. Dichter, Catherine Cerulli, Sonja V. Batten, and Robert M. Bossarte. 2014. "Disparities in Adverse Childhood Experiences Among Individuals with a History of Military Service." *JAMA Psychiatry* 71 (9): 1041–1048. doi: 10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2014.724.
- Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.
- Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2019. "Reflecting on Reflexive Thematic Analysis." *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health* 11 (4): 589–597. doi: 10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806.
- Brewster, Liz, Brigit McWade, and Samuel J. A. Clark. 2020. "A Point of Connection? Wellbeing, the Veteran Identity and Older Adults." *Aging and Society* 41 (9): 1984–2005. doi: 10.1017/S0144686X20000161.
- Burdett, Howard, Charlotte Woodhead, Amy C. Iverson, Simon Wessely, Christopher Dandeker, and Nicola T. Fear. 2012. "Are You a Veteran? Understanding of the Term 'Veteran' Among UK ex-Service Personnel." *Armed Forces and Society* 39 (4): 751–759. doi: 10.1177/0095327X12452033.
- Caddick, Nick, Brett Smith, and Cassandra Phoenix. 2015. "The Effects of Surfing and the Narration of Combat-Related Trauma." *Qualitative Health Research* 25 (1): 76–86. doi: 10.1177/1049732314549477.
- Carpenter, Rob E., and Dave Silberman. 2020. "Veteran–Civilian Career Identity Conflict: What Is Human Resource Development's Role?." *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development* 32 (3): 35–53. doi: 10.1002/nha3.20287.
- Casula, Mattia, Rangarajan, Nandhini, & Shields, Patricia (2021). The potential of working hypotheses for deductive exploratory research. *Quality & Quantity*, 55, 1703–1725. doi: 10.1007/s11135-020-01072-9.
- Corbin, Juliet, and Anselm Strauss. 1990. "Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons, and Evaluative Criteria." *Qualitative Sociology* 13 (1): 3–21. doi: 10.1007/BF00988593.
- De Bere, Samantha R. 2003. "Masculinity in Work and Family Lives: Implications for Military Service and Resettlement." In *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State*, ed. Paul Higate, 91–109. Westport: Praeger.

- Elliott, Jane. 2005. *Using Narrative in Social Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Flack, Mal, and Leah Kite. 2021. "Transition from Military to Civilian: Identity, Social Connectedness, and Veteran Wellbeing." *PLoS ONE* 16 (12): 1–22. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0261634.
- Fleuty, Kristina, Alex Cooper, and Michael Kevin Almond. 2021. "Armed Forces and Veteran Housing Policies: The United Kingdom 2021 Vision." *Journal of Veterans Studies* 7 (1): 232–240. doi: 10.21061/jvs.v7i1.242.
- Forbes, David, Amy Adler, David Pedlar, and Gordon Asmundson. 2023. "Problematic Anger in Military and Veteran Populations with and without PTSD: The Elephant in the Room." *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* 96. doi: 10.1016/j.janxdis.2023.102716.
- Gooch, Kate, Isla Masson, and Emilia Waddington. 2022. "After Care, After Thought? The Invisibility of Care Experienced Men and Women in Prison." *Prison Service Journal* 258: 4–12.
- Green, G., C. Emslie, D. O'Neill, K. Hunt, and S. Walker. 2010. "Exploring the Ambiguities of Masculinity in Accounts of Emotional Distress in the Military Among Young Ex-Servicemen." *Social Science and Medicine* 71: 1480–1488.
- Gribble, Rachel, Panagiotis Spanakis, Sharon Stevelink, Roberto Rona, Nicola Fear, and Laura Goodwin. 2020. *Help-Seeking for Alcohol Problems in Serving and ex-Serving UK Military Personnel*. London: Kings Centre for Military Health Research.
- Hockey, John 1986. *Squaddies: Portrait of a Subculture*. Exeter: Exeter University Publications.
- House of Commons. 2023. *Support for UK Veterans*. CBP-7693.pdf (parliament.uk).
- Howard League for Penal Reform. 2011. *Report of the Inquiry into Former Armed Service Personnel in Prison*. <https://howardleague.org/publications/report-of-the-inquiry-into-former-armed-service-personnel-in-prison-2/>.
- Hunnecutt, Jeni. R. 2022. *Rethinking Reintegration and Veteran Identity*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jenkins, Richard 2008. *Social Identity*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9781315887104.
- Jones, Norman, Marie-Louise Sharp, Ava Phillips, and Sharon A. M. Stevelink. 2019. "Suicidal Ideation, Suicidal Attempts, and Self-Harm in the UK Armed Forces." *Suicide & Life-Threatening Behavior* 49: 1762–1779. doi:10.1111/sltb.12570.
- Kapur, Navneet, David While, Nick Blatchley, Isabelle Bray, and Kate Harrison. 2009. "Suicide After Leaving the UK Armed Forces—A Cohort Study." *PLoS Medicine* 6 (3). doi: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1000026.
- King, Anthony 2006. "The Word of Command: Communication and Cohesion in the Military." *Armed Forces & Society*, 32 (4): 493–512. doi: 10.1177/0095327X05283041.
- Kintzle, Sara, Mary Keeling, Santiago Gómez, and Carl A. Castro. 2018. "The Role of Adverse Childhood Experiences in the Lives of Military Members and Veterans." *Traumatology* 24 (3): 197–204.
- Kvale, Steinar, and Svend Brinkmann. 2009. *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kwan, Jamie, Margaret Jones, and Greta Somaini. 2021. "Post-Deployment Family Violence Among UK Military Personnel." *Psychological Medicine* 48 (13): 2202–2212. doi: 10.1017/S0033291717003695.
- MacManus, Deirdre, Roberto Rona, Hannah Dickson, Greta Somaini, Nicola T. Fear, and Simon Wessely. 2015. "Aggressive and Violent Behavior Among Military Personnel Deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan: Prevalence and Link with Deployment and Combat Exposure." *Epidemiological Reviews* 37: 196–212. doi: 10.1093/epirev/mxu006.
- McAllister, Charn P., Jeremy D. Mackey, Kaylee Hackney, and Pamela L. Perrewé. 2015. "From Combat to Khakis: An Exploratory Examination of Job Stress with Veterans." *Military Psychology* 27 (2): 93–107. doi: 10.1037/mil0000068.
- Ministry of Justice. 2022. *Ex-service Personnel in the Prison Population, England and Wales*. London: Ministry of Justice.
- Moore, Emma, Kayla Williams, and Zachary Jaynes. 2020. *United Kingdom Veteran Landscape*. Washington, DC: Centre for a New American Security.
- Morin, Rich. 2011. *The Difficult Transition from Military to Civilian Life*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

- Murphy, Dominic, and Walter Busuttill. 2019. "Understanding the Needs of Veterans Seeking Support for Mental Health Difficulties." *British Medical Journal* 166(4). doi: 10.1136/jramc-2019-001204.
- Murphy, Dominic, and David Turgoose. 2019. "Exploring Patterns of Alcohol Misuse in Treatment-Seeking UK Veterans: A Cross-Sectional Study." *Addictive Behaviors* 92: 14–19. doi:10.1016/j.addbeh.2018.11.044.
- Murphy, Dominic, Rachel Ashwick, Emma Palmer, and Walter Busuttill. 2020. "Adverse Childhood Experiences and Mental Health in UK Military Veterans." *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 217 (2): 506–512.
- Noaks, Lesley, and Emma Wincup. 2004. *Criminological Research: Understanding Qualitative Methods*. London: Sage Publications.
- Palmer, Laura, Roberto J. Rona, Nicola T. Fear, and Sharon Stevelink. 2021. *The Evolution of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the UK Armed Forces: Traumatic Exposures in Iraq and Afghanistan and Responses of Distress*. London: Kings Centre for Military Health Research.
- Pinder, Richard J., Amy C. Iversen, Nav Kapur, Simon Wessely, and Nicola T. Fear. 2011. "Self-Harm and Attempted Suicide Among UK Armed Forces Personnel: Results of a Cross-Sectional Survey." *Lancet* 381: 907–917. doi: 10.1177/0020764011408534.
- Rafferty, Laura, Sharon Stevelink, Neil Greenberg, and Simon Wessely. 2017. *Stigma and Barriers to Care in Service Leavers with Mental Health Problems*. London: King's College London.
- Rhead, Rebecca., Deirdre MacManus, Margaret Jones, Neil Greenberg, Nicola Fear, and Laura Goodwin. 2022. "Mental Health Disorders and Alcohol Misuse among UK Military Veterans and the General Population: A Comparison Study." *Psychological Medicine* 52 (2): 292–302. doi: 10.1017/S0033291720001944.
- Ritchie, Jane, and Jane Lewis. 2003. *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: Sage.
- Robson, Colin. 2002. *Real World Research*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Rolfe, Steve, and Isobel Anderson. 2022. "Meeting the Housing Needs of Military Veterans: Exploring Collaboration and Governance." *Housing Studies* 39 (2): 438–458. doi: 10.1080/02673037.2022.2056153.
- Romaniuk, Madeleine., and Chloe Kidd. 2018. "The Psychological Adjustment Experience of Reintegration Following Discharge from Military Service: A Systemic Review." *Journal of Military and Veterans Health* 26 (2): 60–73. doi: 05.2021-33613133.
- Rubin, Herbert J., and Irene S. Rubin. 1995. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. London: Sage Publications.
- Sadler, Nicole, David Pedlar, and Robert Ursano. 2024. "Suicide in Military and Veteran Populations: A View Across the Five Eyes Nations." *Psychiatry* 87 (2): 161–164. doi: 10.1080/00332747.2024.2306794.
- Sharp, Marie-Louise, Sofia Franchini, Margaret Jones, Ray Leal, Simon Wessely, Sharon Stevelink, and Nicola T. Fear. 2024. *Health and Wellbeing Study of Serving and Ex-Serving UK Armed Forces Personnel: Phase 4*. London: Office for Veterans' Affairs.
- Short, Roxanna, Hannah Dickson, Neil Greenberg, and Deirdre MacManus. 2018. "Offending Behaviour, Health and Wellbeing of Military Veterans in the Criminal Justice System." *PLoS ONE* 13 (11): 1–17.
- Stebbins, R. A. (2001). *Exploratory Research in the Social Sciences*. London: Sage.
- Tajfel, H., and John C. Turner. 1979. "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict." In *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel, 33–47. Monterey: Brooks/Cole.
- Tarbet, Zachary, Steven Moore, and Ahmed Alanazi. 2021. "Discharge, but No Exit: An Existential Qualitative Interpretive Meta-Synthesis of Veteran Reintegration." *The British Journal of Social Work* 51 (8): 3319–3339. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcaa133.
- Thompson, James M., Wendy Lockhart, Mary B. Roach, Hazel Atuel, Stephanie Bélanger, Tim Black, Carl A. Castro, Daniel Cox, Alex Cooper, Catherine de Boer, Sarah Dentry, Karl Hamner, Duncan Shields, and Tiia-Triin T Truusa. 2017. *Veterans' Identities and Well-Being in Transition to Civilian Life: A Resource for Policy Analysts, Program Designers, Service Providers and Researchers*. Charlotte-town: Veteran Affairs Canada.

- Toole, Kellie, and Elaine Waddell. 2023. "Veteran Perceptions of Pathways to Offending: Ex-Australian Defence Force Personnel in South Australian Prisons." *Griffith Law Review* 32 (1): 1–29. doi: 10.1080/10383441.2023.2188014.
- Turgoose, David, and Dominic Murphy. 2021. "Exploring the Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in a Treatment-Seeking Veteran Population." *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health* 7 (2): 39–50.
- Wainwright, Verity, Sharon McDonnell, Charlotte Lennox, Jenny Shaw, and Jane Senior. 2016. "Soldier, Civilian, Criminal: Identifying Pathways to Offending of Ex-Armed Forces Personnel in Prison." *Psychology, Crime and Law* 22 (8): 741–757. doi: 10.1080/1068316X.2016.1181175.
- Walker, David. 2012. "Anticipating Army Exit: Identity Constructions of Final Year UK Career Soldiers." *Armed Forces and Society* 39 (2): 284–304. doi: 10.1177/0095327X12437689.
- Williamson, Victoria, Neil Greenberg, and Sharon A. M. Stevelink. 2019a. "Perceived Stigma and Barriers to Care in UK Armed Forces Personnel and Veterans with and without Probable Mental Disorders." *BMC Psychology* 7 (75). doi: 10.1186/s40359-019-0351-7.
- Williamson, Victoria, Dominic M. Murphy, Sharon Stevelink, Shannon Allen, Edgar Jones, and Neil Greenberg. 2019b. "The Impact of Trauma Exposure and Moral Injury on UK Military Veterans: A Qualitative Study." *European Journal of Psychotraumatology* 11 (1): 1-10. doi: 10.1080/20008198.2019.1704554.
- Williamson, Charlotte, Alice Wickersham, Marie-Louise Sharp, Danielle Dryden, Amos Simms, Nicola T. Fear, Dominic Murphy, Laura Goodwin, and Daniel Leightley. 2023a. "Loneliness among UK Veterans: Associations with Quality of Life, Alcohol Misuse, and Perceptions of Partner Drinking." *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health* 9 (4): 88–99. doi: 10.3138/jmvfh-2023-000.
- Williamson Victoria, Dominic Murphy, Amanda Bonson, Vicky Aldridge, Danai Serfioti, and Neil Greenberg. 2023b. "Restore and Rebuild (R&R)—A Feasibility Pilot Study of a Co-Designed Intervention for Moral Injury-Related Mental Health Difficulties." *European Journal of Psychotraumatology* 14 (2): 1–14. doi: 10.1080/20008066.2023.2256204.
- Wilson, Gemma, Mick Hill, and Matthew Kiernan. 2018. "Loneliness and Social Isolation of Military Veterans: Systematic Narrative Review." *Occupational Medicine* 68 (9): 600–609. doi: 10.1093/occ-med/kqy160.
- Winslow, Donna. 1998. "Misplaced Loyalties: The Role of Military Culture in the Breakdown of Discipline in Peace Operations." *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne de Sociologie* 35 (3): 345–367.
- Woodward, Rachel, and K. Neil Jenkins. 2011. "Military Identities in the Situated Accounts of British Military Personnel." *Sociology* 45 (2): 252–268. doi: 10.1177/0038038510394.