

Cross-Party Group on The Armed Forces and Veterans Community

21 June 2023

This meeting included the AGM.

Minute

Item 1

Introductions and Opening Remarks Maurice Golden MSP (Convenor) and Maurice Corry (Chair).

Item 2

Confirmation of attendance.

Maurice Golden MSP and Douglas Lumsden MSP were in attendance, with a further 13 members of the Cross Party Group attending on site and 32 attending online.

Item 3

Minutes of the previous meeting, 30 March 2023

The Minutes of the meeting that took place on 30 March 2023 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting. There were no matters arising from the minutes that would not be dealt with elsewhere in the agenda.

Item 4

Transition from the Services. Two presentations were provided,

1. Edinburgh Napier University Report into Transition from the Services ‘You’re in your Own Time now’ was presented by Dr Gerri Matthews-Smith.

Gerri Matthews-Smith provided a synopsis on the report that had been carried out by Edinburgh Napier University into current experiences of transition from the Services to civilian life in Scotland. The final report is available on the Edinburgh Napier University website at: [Research & Publications \(napier.ac.uk\)](https://www.napier.ac.uk/research-publications)

2. A Child’s Perspective of Transition from the Services was presented and discussed by Nina Collins from Forces Children Scotland and two youngsters with recent experience of their families leaving the services.

The experience of being part of a family that is transitioning from the Services was discussed, in particular the impact that this can have on children of Service families. Some of the difficulties that were identified include:

- Moving to a new area and a community with no instinctive understanding of what Service life has been like.
- Lack of preparation for children, in particular if the move is at short notice.
- Losing connections to the 'Military Family'; in particular when being part of that brings with it an immense feeling of pride and of belonging.

It was also noted that:

- Many Service children recognise the resilience they develop.
- An ability to develop friendships quickly.

There followed a discussion about the presentation and points identified.

Item 5

Promoting the Employability and Employment of Veterans:

Cross Party Group - Agenda item 5

Promoting the Employability and Employment of Veterans: Employment Trends

Alistair Halliday, CEO of the Forces Employment Charity briefed the group on a variety of matters relating to the employment of veterans; in particular, he covered:

Why employment? It is vital that if veterans are in suitable employment many of other problems go away – money and status.

Context CTP SL and Veterans picture in Scotland: Approximately 14,000 personnel leave the Services annually, of these, around 1000 resettle in Scotland. 87% are in employment after 6 months. The figure for Scotland is slightly better with 87.8% in employment after 6 months. There are regional variations, for example Dundee 97.8%, Galashiels 94%, the lowest is Perth at 77% - but 19% economically inactive. Glasgow and Edinburgh both 88%. The Career Transition Project's Future Horizons project supports 105 Early Service Leavers each year from Rosyth

The Forces Employment Charity supported 600 Veterans and Spouses in Scotland last year.

Employment Picture – in Scotland: It is still a job seekers market – although there are signs of this slowing down. All UK Regions net employment outlook remains positive with Scotland employment at +23%, UK net is averaging at 29% (England's net outlook +26%). This is a positive outlook considering where we are with inflation, cost of living etc, however the talent and skills shortage according to employers is at 80% reaching a 17 year high.

Skills. The skills in highest demand were:

Common skills

- Communications;
- Management;
- Customer Service.

Specialised skills

- Finance;
- Auditing;
- Accounting.

The highest demand was for occupations include:

- Energy – Renewables
- Tech Cyber
- Care Workers and Home Carers;
- Nurses;
- Sales Related Occupations; and
- Programmers and Software Development Professionals

In summary, Scotland's labour market key indicators show a mixed but resilient picture: the unemployment rate has remained unchanged over the last three months, the UK rate has increased marginally during the same period. Unemployment remains at a near historic low rate at 3.1% in Scotland. However, the employment rate and economic activity have fallen over the quarter, whereas the UK sees a slight increase in employment.

Despite this, some economic forecasters are predicting that the UK economy overall will now avoid a technical recession in 2023.

Engagement with Employers – the narrative: Key messages that are being taken to employers include:

- Our Employer Relationship Managers have 698 employers signed up to the Employer Recognition Scheme in Scotland. Levels of effort vary, with some very active such as Subsea 7, Fife Council and many other local authorities to some others that maintain a presence and post opportunities when they have them.
- Murrayfield Careers fair is second largest across UK. While employment landscape for veterans is positive at the moment this is likely to change.
- We need to change narrative for employers - no need to feel sorry for veterans – good for bottom line. Value they bring to workplace is huge. Valued and Valuable. Not just about recruiting or hiring – about retention - Employers need to be more open to discussions around transferable skills, and pathways into employment.
- The talent pool is an excellent resource but recognising that there may still need to be some investment (time, money and/or training) by employers but this investment is rewarded with excellent staff that will pay for themselves in no time at all. Next steps not just about recruitment or hiring - but retention, career path, training and mentoring are now needed. Maintain the narrative of why SLs are good for bottom line.
- YouGov Report
 - Increase the visibility of existing support
 - Provide more information and guidance to employers
 - Challenge perceptions around mental health
 - Target specific groups with tailored messaging

Key themes

- CTP stats are pretty good – but clear many veterans post CTP are in need of more support to find right job or sustainable employment. Some under employment. Need for clearer pathways - into sectors.
- We want to incentivise employers to do more than just recruit – but retain staff – by mentor, training, careers pathways etc

- Need to support more vulnerable inc Women, ESLs, LGBT, WIS ethnic minority/BAME

Other themes

- Military Women, Spousal Employment, Under employment, Self employment. Great collaboration.

There followed a short discussion on employment and employability of veterans.

Item 6

Annual General Meeting – Summary of Activity: Jim Wilson presented the salient points from the Annual Return on the Cross Party Group.

Item 7

Open Forum

Date of next meetings:

October 18th (Wed); this was subsequently revised to Tuesday 7th November, due to Parliamentary recess.

Further topics for consideration that have been suggested include: Health, Housing and Female Veterans Issues. It has also been suggested that we invite the Scottish Veterans Commissioner and The Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans to provide updates. I would welcome any further suggestions for consideration.