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**Supporting the Transition of Military
Personnel (SToMP):
Ex-Armed Service Personnel, Healthy
Relationships and Domestic Abuse: A
Qualitative Study.**

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Foreword:

We are delighted to be able to introduce this important piece of research, commissioned by the Supporting the Transition of Military Personnel (SToMP) Project and funded by Welsh Government's Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence division.

Collaboration is at the heart of everything that the Integrated Offender Management Cymru Board seeks to achieve. By directing our combined resources onto the priority groups outlined in the Reducing Reoffending Strategy and the soon to be published 'A Framework to support positive change for those at risk of offending in Wales', criminal justice organisations Welsh Government and our voluntary sector partners are seeking to prevent offending and reduce re-offending in Wales through collaboration. This particular piece of research commissioned by SToMP and undertaken by Wrexham Glyndwr University, targets two of the 'Frameworks' priority groups; ex-Armed Service Personnel and domestic violence perpetrators.

Coordination of a collaborative approach for ex Armed Service Personnel in the criminal justice system in Wales is achieved through IOM Cymru SToMP Project, which is primarily funded by the Ministry of Defence Armed Forces Covenant Fund. SToMP seeks to improve the identification and signposting of ex-Armed Service Personnel at all stages of the Criminal Justice System and is committed to working closely with partners to ensure the best outcomes for this priority group.

It's important to acknowledge that serving in the Armed Services acts as a protective factor for the vast majority of those that join; meaning that they are less likely to enter the criminal justice system than the general population. The vast majority who serve are able to successfully resettle into our communities or 'civvy street' once they leave. However IOM Cymru is committed to learning more about the profile of those that do enter the criminal justice system, so that we can better support them and reduce their risk of re-offending, but importantly so that we can also seek to prevent others from following the same path.

The Armed Services community is also a reflection of a wider society within which domestic abuse is not uncommon. It is inevitable that domestic abuse is also perpetrated by ex-Armed Service Personnel and it is therefore important to understand the dynamics within this community that can potentially increase the vulnerability of victims. This research, therefore is an important exploration of ex-Armed Service Personnel's ability to form and sustain healthy relationships with partners, that prompts organisations to consider how we could be more responsive to this group in order to seek to prevent domestic abuse.



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Disclaimer

Please note that the findings and conclusions of this report are those of independent researchers. They do not necessarily represent the views of the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Cymru SToMP Project team, the National Probation Service in Wales, or the Welsh Government.

Research Team:

Dr Iolo Madoc-Jones (Principal Investigator) is Reader in Social and Criminal Justice at Wrexham Glyndwr University. He is a Welsh speaker and an experienced criminal justice practitioner and researcher who has extensive experience of interviewing offenders in prison settings and has published widely on the issue of domestic abuse and victims. He has been involved in a number of inspections of offender management services and prisons, conducted a review into services for victims of crime for the North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner and is currently involved in a multi-million pound Big Lottery funded research into alcohol use by the over 50s.

Dr Nikki Lloyd Jones (Co-investigator) is senior lecturer in Nursing at Wrexham Glyndwr University. She is currently principal investigator on a funded research study titled: "Leaving the Armed forces and Living in North Wales: An exploratory study into decision-making as a civilian." This research will offer insight into 'challenges' that ex-service people face when attempting to navigate what are taken-for-granted expectations by the 'ordinary' civilian in their everyday life. Dr Lloyd-Jones has significant experience of interviewing Ex-ASP through her involvement in this project the outcomes of which will inform the framework for a new curriculum informing the public sector of Ex-ASP' needs

Emyr Owen (Co-Investigator) is a senior lecturer in social work at Wrexham Glyndwr University. He is experienced in engaging with vulnerable people by dint of his career working in child protection and family court welfare roles. He is a Welsh speaker and passed Westbury officer selection and Sandhurst and held the rank of Captain in the parachute regiment. He is currently completing a PhD at the University of Central Lancashire exploring how social workers make sense of their occupation.

Glossary

Domestic Abuse: We use the term 'domestic abuse' to include acts of violence and/or abusive, threatening, intimidating or controlling behaviour.

Ex-ASP (Ex-Armed Service Personnel): In this report an Ex-ASP is defined as per SSAFA and Government criteria. The term refers to anyone who has served for at least one day in the Armed Forces (Regular and Reserve), as well as Merchant Navy seafarers and fisherman who have served in a vessel that was operated to facilitate military operations by the Armed Forces (WAG 2013)

NOMS: National Offender Management Service

PTSD: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

SToMP: Supporting the Transition of Military Personnel (SToMP) project

Victim: For the purposes of this report and in recognition of the harm caused, we mostly make use of the term 'victim' as opposed to 'survivor' of domestic abuse.

WG: Welsh Government

Executive Summary

The aim of the research was to explore whether particular issues arise for Ex-ASP in forming and sustaining healthy relationships and whether services could be developed to assist relevant Ex-ASP avoid a spiral into domestic abuse perpetration and contact with the Criminal Justice System. The study, commissioned by the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Cymru SToMP project led by the National Probation Service in Wales, gathered the perceptions of a sample of 12 Ex-ASP and 20 informants providing services to Ex-ASP in Wales.

This report should not be read as supporting the conclusion that Ex-ASP are inherently more criminal, violent, and prone to relationship difficulties or domestic abuse than non-Ex-ASP. Or that either the military welfare or justice system are necessarily any worse at dealing with domestic abuse than the civilian welfare and justice systems. Domestic violence and abuse is prevalent in society and the civilian welfare and criminal justice systems continue to be criticised for failures to meet the needs of victims who experience domestic abuse (Madoc-Jones et al., 2015). Most Ex-ASP transition well into civilian life. This report focuses on the minority who may not and be at risk of domestic abuse.

Key findings of the study are:

Background Literature:

- Sections of the armed services recruit individuals from social circumstances that are associated with a higher risk of involvement in crime.
- Serving in the armed forces is a complex and diverse experience and individual differences may mean some experience very positively demands, conditions and circumstances others experience very negatively.
- During their service careers many recruits may acquire the kind of social skills and knowledge to occupy improved social and economic positions on discharge from the armed forces.
- Some recruits, however, may struggle to cope as they transition out of service life.
- Younger recruits who are discharged early seem at elevated risk of getting involved in the Criminal Justice System.
- Existent research suggests some male dominated social contexts are likely sites for the cultivation of ideas and attitudes supportive of domestic abuse.
- Studies frequently associate violence against women with expectations of male dominance and so understand domestic violence through the prism of gender.
- More recently it has been suggested that the most common form of domestic abuse is 'situational couple violence' which is gender neutral and has its origins in substance misuse, stress and/or communication problems

Context:

- Almost all of the prisoner respondents described themselves as coming from deprived backgrounds, as having joined the military at the age of 16 or 17 and having left early. The longest service history was 10 years, the shortest 2.5 years, but the mode (most common service length) was 4 years.
- Most prisoner respondents had served in the army and in conflict zones.
- Nine respondents made reference to behaviour that would constitute being abusive or violent within a relationship. All but two were in custody for a violent offence. All 12 implicated alcohol or drug misuse in their offending behaviour.
- Particular social relationships defined the military experience for all respondents in this research. Serving was associated with satisfying fraternal relationships performed within a reassuring regime.

Experience of forming and sustaining healthy relationships:

- Respondents identified challenges in forming and maintaining healthy relationships for ASP linked to separation and infidelity.
- Finding work was cited as the most important determinant in terms of how well transitioning out of armed services was accomplished and whether healthy relationships were maintained.
- The primacy given to work appeared related to its disciplinary and structuring potential to provide a routine for Ex-ASP to follow
- The absence of routine could be associated with anti-social conduct.
- Making choices as opposed to following orders was a challenge from some recruits after they were discharged from the armed forces.
- Heavy drinking, whilst normalised in the armed forces, was implicated by all prisoner respondents in their difficulties and offending behaviour
- Some respondents associated relationship difficulties they had experienced with military training and culture, especially hypervigilance to threat and a tendency to avoid intimacy predicated on self-disclosure

Interaction with Statutory and Non-Statutory organisations prior to entering the Criminal Justice System:

- Prisoner respondents reported little help had been offered to them on transitioning out of the armed services.
- None of the prisoner respondents owned to having contacted welfare agencies regarding relationship difficulties or domestic abuse
- Domestic abuse was not considered a significant problem in military contexts by some service provider respondents.
- This perception may be partly attributable to a reduced likelihood relationship difficulties would be discussed in military contexts.
- Other provider respondents suggested domestic abuse was an under-reported and hidden problem because an informal approach to managing such behaviour could obtain in some military contexts.

Ability to intervene and what interventions would be of benefit in supporting Ex-ASP in avoiding a spiral into domestic abuse:

- Most non-statutory stakeholders considered themselves able to recognise and act to address early signs of a spiral into domestic abuse
- Their assessments drew largely on an understanding of domestic abuse as situational and therefore appropriate responses focused on alleviating stressors.
- The services non-statutory agencies offered were largely reactive and orientated around crisis intervention.
- Some respondents considered more assertive approaches to working with EX-ASP should be adopted.
- Also that awareness of available services in the community needed to be raised.
- Non-statutory stakeholders understood Ex-ASP preferred engaging with other Ex-ASP. Some prisoner respondents affirmed this preference
- Some statutory respondents were less positive about the ability of non-statutory agencies to engage effectively with EX-ASP where domestic abuse was involved.
- Some Statutory staff considered military secrecy a barrier to multi-agency working.
- Statutory staff were more likely to understand domestic violence through the prism of gender, and expectancies around power and control.

- Statutory staff understood domestic abuse was an issue requiring more joined up and specialist responses than non-statutory charities were currently able to provide.

Recommendations

- The potential for male dominated environments to be supportive of gender stereotypes should be recognised and formal and informal interventions to delegitimise attitudes supportive of domestic abuse should be encouraged and promoted in such settings.
- At the point of transition there should be closer joint working between the military and specialist Ex-ASP, statutory and domestic violence service providers to identify individuals and families that may be at risk of domestic abuse.
- Awareness-raising and training on the vulnerability of some Ex-ASP at the point of transition (young, early leavers) should be undertaken with key professionals working with ASP and Ex-ASP.
- Building on existing knowledge about how to engage hard to reach groups, an assertive approach to providing support services to Ex-ASP and their families should be piloted and reviewed.
- Referral pathways into specialist domestic abuse related services to address needs associated with maintaining healthy relationships should be developed.
- Educational materials and information about sources of support for maintaining healthy relationships should be available to Ex-ASP and their families at the point of discharge.
- Individuals working with Ex-ASP should diversify their practice approaches to increase the range of specific interventions available to prevent and address domestic abuse.

Study methods

The aim of the research was to explore whether particular issues arise for Ex-ASP in forming and sustaining healthy relationships and whether services could be developed to assist those individuals who may otherwise enter into a spiral of domestic abuse perpetration and contact with the criminal justice system.

The objectives were:

1. To explore ex- ASP experience of forming and sustaining healthy non-abusive relationships
2. To explore ex- ASP interaction with statutory and non-statutory organisations prior to entering the criminal justice system
3. To identify whether organisations have the potential ability to intervene and what interventions would be of benefit in supporting Ex-ASP to maintain healthy relationships and avoid domestic abuse and contact with the criminal justice system

Consonant with the available funding and specifications issued for this research, the research design commended semi-structured qualitative interviews with Ex-ASP who had experienced difficulties forming healthy relationships and owned to engaging in domestic abuse. In addition, semi-structured interviews with key informants working with Ex-ASP across Wales.

A gatekeeper in HMP and YOI Parc in Bridgend, South Wales, indicated a willingness to help with respondent recruitment. A sampling strategy was devised indicating men were deemed eligible to take part in our research if they had a history in the armed services and either had a conviction for an offence associated with, domestic abuse e.g. violence, harassment, criminal damage, or otherwise considered their military experiences meant they could contribute to our research into the issue. An inclusive approach had to be adopted to preclude the possibility of individuals being specifically identified by peers as perpetrators of domestic abuse or violence.

A poster was used to advertise the research. No inducements were offered other than the opportunity to help inform service provision for future ex-service staff. Volunteers were told that if they so wished, they could elect to be interviewed by an Ex-ASP. Arrangements were made by the gatekeeper for the researchers to attend the prison to undertake interviews. Prior to interviews it was explained to respondents that

- Participation was voluntary, and would have no bearing on the management of their case
- That they would not be identified in outputs from the study,
- That they could withdraw at any time (without providing a reason by contacting the gatekeeper)
- Interviews would be recorded
- That information obtained during the interviews would only be shared with other professionals without their consent if issues associated with a risk of harm to self or others arose

Twelve men volunteered to take part and were assessed by gatekeepers as meeting the research criteria. All 12 were subsequently interviewed face to face at the gatekeeping prison. Almost all of these respondents described themselves as coming from deprived backgrounds and as having joined the military at the age of 16 or 17. Most had served in the army and in conflict zones; but there were representatives who had not seen combat and were from the Navy and military police. The longest service history was 10 years, the shortest 2.5 years, but the mode (most common service length) was 4 years. Nine respondents made reference to behaviour that would constitute being abusive or violent within a relationship. All but two were in custody for a violent offence. All 12 implicated alcohol or drug misuse in their offending behaviour.

Key representatives within agencies/organisations were identified by commissioners, by Ex-ASP and through existing links researchers had with the ASP and Ex-ASP community. Respondents were drawn from: Local Veteran's services, Local Authorities, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA), Military Ex-ASP Support Services, Police, National Probation Service, Her Majesty's Prison Service, Combat Stress, Help for Heroes, Llandudno Centre Blind Ex-ASP UK, Royal British Legion, All Wales Ex-ASP Health and Wellbeing Service, Welsh Women's Aid, Tai Hafan, Forces in Mind Trust.

Twelve face to face and eight telephone interviews were conducted with respondents representing these agencies. All but two interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. Two interviews were subject to note taking due to technical difficulties. It is noteworthy that around half of the people interviewed were themselves ex-service staff. Thus as well as being able to comment on the needs of ex-service staff as it presented itself to them in a professional capacity, many respondents were able to draw on their own experiences of service life when answering research questions.

The requirements of the Welsh Language Scheme were observed. While respondents were given the opportunity to be interviewed in the Welsh language no participant availed themselves of that opportunity.

Data was analysed through adopting a constant comparison approach. The transcripts were organised into headings to meet the research objectives: the experiences of ex-armed forces personnel and their intimate relationships; their interaction with statutory and non-statutory organisations; the potential ability of organisations to intervene to support ex-armed forces personnel and their families; whether bespoke interventions to support ex-armed forces personnel would be of benefit. Data of specific interest was highlighted in all transcripts and then the research team met to discuss these highlighted themes and sub-themes; looking for consensus and interpreting the findings in response to the research objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In the following chapter we draw on accounts of respondents from the larger study sample, whose comments best illustrate the issues which form the focus of the report. Particular respondents feature more than others because while their accounts did not differ from those in the wider sample, their responses were more fully articulated and cogently presented than was the case in some other interviews.

Findings are presented using data extracts codes as follows:

Prisoner respondents coded P1-P12 in data extracts

Stakeholders coded SP1-SP20 in data extracts.

All names of people/places in the data extracts have been altered to protect people's anonymity.

Background Review

Introduction

Serving in the armed forces service is a complex experience, liable to analysis on (geo) political, social and/or personal levels. The primary focus for this research is on the personal and what support is available and might be provided to help Ex-ASP maintain healthy relationships and avoid a spiral into domestic abuse and future contact with the criminal justice system. Hence, this research is not especially focused with bringing a critical lens to bare on militarism, with the victim experience or whether domestic abuse and violence is more prevalent in the serving or Ex-ASP community.

According to Williamson (2011) and Gray (2015) very little research has been conducted in the UK on healthy relationships, domestic abuse and military personnel. In relation to Ex-ASP, Murray (2014) suggests more needs to be done to fully understand the needs of this unique population. The King's Centre for Military Health Research has recently secured funding for a study to look at domestic violence among ASP and EX-ASP. However, this will not report outcomes until January 2020.

In a range of contexts, responses to domestic violence have focused primarily on intervention after the problem has already been identified and harm has occurred. When there have been societal responses to domestic violence, they have been largely centred on crisis intervention in order to prevent further harm (Wolfe and Jaffee 1999). Insufficient emphasis has traditionally been placed on the identification and amelioration of needs prior to contact with statutory services. One of the recommendations from a Howard League for Penal Reform led inquiry into Ex-ASP in prison in 2011, however, was for the potential of early identification and prevention schemes to be used with Ex-ASP to be explored. The prevention needs of Ex-ASP in relation to domestic abuse is an important area to study because Ex-ASP and Domestic Abuse perpetrators have been highlighted as two of the six priority groups within the 'Framework to Support Positive Change for those at Risk of Offending in Wales' (Welsh Government, Pending) . Their needs links to Welsh Government priorities in Wales as one purpose of The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 is to improve arrangements for the prevention of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The post deployment needs of Ex-ASP will assume a greater significance over the next few years. This is by dint of the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) leading to reductions in the numbers of regular personnel and, correspondingly, greater number of Ex-ASP in the community. If

experience of combat is significant to understanding the needs of Ex-ASP, it will be relevant that some of these will be amongst the 220,550 individuals who have been deployed in conflict zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan since 2003 (Gray, 2015).

Armed Service and Transitioning

According to the Philips Review there are around four million Ex-ASP living in England and Wales. Approximately 20,000 personnel leave the UK Armed Forces annually and negotiate new social and relational experiences as part of the process of re-integration into civilian life (Defence Analytical Services and Advice, 2010). Most adjust to civilian life without coming to the attention of statutory services. However, over recent years concerns have been expressed that some struggle with transitioning and then become involved in the criminal justice system (Murray, 2014).

Individuals are largely recruited into the armed forces from particular community groups. The Defence Select Committee (2005) suggested that 69% of new army recruits come from a broken home and 16% per cent have been long-term unemployed before joining. 50% are from a deprived background and standards of literacy amongst new recruits is low (Gee 2007). From the outset therefore, it may be noted that many individuals enter the armed forces at a higher risk of involvement in crime.

The experience of serving in the armed forces will vary as a function of age, gender, class and ethnicity. An RAF pilot's experiences will differ considerably from that of an army regular. Bullying has blighted the experiences of some recruits (Brooke and Gau, 2015; Wainwright et al., 2016). Unrelated to this, individual differences will mean some experience very negatively demands, conditions and circumstances others may experience very positively. That said, social spaces are not undifferentiated and most are characterised by particular rules and regularities that promote certain practices above others. Thus some commonalities may be associated with service life.

As Hinjosa (2010) argues military institutions nurture a strong sense of belonging and group identification. This is associated with a common willingness and preparedness to engage in combat and the presence of peers similarly active within a chain of command and away from family. Group identification is further promoted by the provision of fairly comprehensive inward facing services that can provide for the totality of a recruit's occupational, financial, housing, welfare, training and health needs. Moreover by engagement not only in common employment practices, but social activities outside of work hours, for example, in onsite Navy Army & Air Force Institutes (Naafi).

A long standing suggestion is that recruits into the armed forces learn to be honest, dependable and to show integrity as a result of the training they receive (Hakeem, 1946; Goffman, 1960). Thereafter that the culture that inculcates itself of new recruits privileges displays of resilience, stoicism, self-reliance, discipline and control which may be associated with a commitment to protecting the vulnerable and putting group above individual needs (Higate 2001). Belief in the value of this culture often underpin periodic demands to reintroduce national service in the UK to address perceived problems with youth anti-social behaviour or crime. Joining the armed forces has been noted as a potentially protective factor in the development of social bonds and social control in some young people (Laub and Sampson, 1993; Sampson and Laub 2005). During a service career, additional learning may be associated with the attainment of specific work and/or educational skills. Hence it has been argued that the experience of serving endows many recruits with the social skills and learning opportunities to occupy improved social and economic positions within society.

As Woodward (2000, p.640) points out "Soldiers are not born but made. They are fashioned through their training in specific ways, for specific ends". One of these ends is warfare- a pursuit which in recent history has tended to be reserved for men. Albeit women are increasingly present in all branches of the armed services, they account for only 12.7% of officers and 9.4% of other ranks (House of Commons 2014). Thus Higate (2001), Higate and Cameron (2006) and Green et al (2010) argue that the culture that prevails in military settings also privileges a hegemonic masculinity which prescribes that men should be 'tough', risk taking and dominant over women. The concept of hegemonic masculinity offers a useful analytical point of reference for understanding life in the armed forces. Its explanatory potential is explored at a later point. However, as Higate (2007, p.102) argues, it is important not to attribute such power to it as to assume men in the armed forces have no agency and that a single homogenous masculine identity, necessarily problematic, attends on military service. Bourdieu (1977) suggests new dispositions etch themselves into people within the limits set by earlier experiences and the layering that occurs may show various degrees of integration. Moreover it is important to note that the masculinity being referred to here is present and finds its own particular expression in a range of non-military settings.

Whilst all roles in the armed forces will be associated with their own particular challenges and opportunities, many will engage recruits in direct combat. Since the end of the Second World War and up to February 2016, 7,185 UK servicemen and women have been killed in conflict zones. 722 asp have been killed by hostile action in Northern Ireland, 405 in Afghanistan and 135 in Iraq (Ministry of Defence, 2015). The number who sustained serious and life changing physical and psychological injuries is considerably higher. Armed service is unique in the sense that in no other context are individuals prepared for the eventuality they may have to kill others and sacrifice their

own lives at the behest of their country. Each year in the UK, the deaths and injuries, as well as the willingness of survivors to risk their lives remains the object of Remembrance Day events.

For those who come to the end of their service career, it is noted that the transition out of the armed service will be challenging. This may be especially so if significant life changing physical and/or psychological injuries have been sustained. As Wainwright (2016, p.11) points out, however, irrespective of any impairments, “leaving the armed forces is more than leaving a place of employment; for many it is a loss of family and a complete way of life”. In many cases transition out of the armed forces will be facilitated by opportunities to use skills accumulated during service life. Here it is important to note, however, the acquisition of skills is not in itself sufficient to ensure a smoother transition. Opportunities to use those skills are required which during times of economic decline may be limited.

Dispositions and skills acquired during service life will be most readily expended in a similar field. Higate (2001) refers therefore to an attraction Ex-ASP have to physical work by dint of the physical capital service life has bestowed upon them. Higate (2001) also suggests Ex-ASP may be found disproportionately located in uniformed roles e.g. security industry, fire, police and prison settings because such occupations are orientated around disciplined routines and the chain of command. Higate (2001) refers to homosociability being attendant on service life- that is to say an aptitude and preference towards engaging in (non-sexual) relationships with members of the same gender. Higate (2001, p.456) suggests that some jobs like policing may be attractive to Ex-ASP because they provide “ontological or emotional security within a recognizably gendered cultural milieu”. Some individuals will be able to transfer acquired dispositions and skills and expend them in a range of very different fields. However, it has been suggested that men trained to fight in male dominated contexts may struggle with some post conflict roles that require displays of compassion, sensitivity, and empathy (Razack, 2004).

The pervasiveness of military life and culture and the ready availability of inward facing services has led some to suggest armed forces personnel can become institutionalised during their service career. Thus on transitioning out of the military they may be less self-reliant, knowledgeable about and capable of dealing with stressors that civilians may deem routine (Welsh Government, 2013). These include stressors associated with paying bills, budgeting, finding work and maintaining house and home. Hoge et al (2007) and Iversen et al. (2011) suggest there is stigma towards asking for help in the military culture because resilience in the face of adversity is admired. If service personnel fail to develop both the type of skills required to bridge into mainstream services and to ask for help, however, problems may arise (Welsh Government, 2013). Ex-ASP may eventually work through the

challenges associated with transition into the civilian field. Alternatively they may suffer in silence and only come to the attention of statutory services further down the line when their capacities for coping are overwhelmed.

Cultural spill over theories draw on learning theories to construct problems Ex-ASP may experience with transitioning as arising from maintaining attitudes or engaging in practices which whilst legitimate in the military, may be problematic or even illegal in civil society (Brooke and Gau 2015). In the US Hunter (2007) has identified several elements of military culture that might be problematic if transferred into civilian contexts. Examples include the general acceptance of violence and anti-social conduct following alcohol use. Heavy drinking, is recognised as a particular problem within the Armed Forces. One study found 67% of ex-servicemen, compared to 38% of men in the general population in the UK were drinking at a level considered by the World Health Organisation to be harmful to health (Fear et al 2007.) A military role associated with early rising, physical activity, regular balanced meals and regular health checks can provide a natural buttress against excessive and harmful heavy drinking. However in the absence of such buffers, problems may arise when heavy drinking practices are carried over into community settings.

As of December 2014, 43.7% of British regular forces personnel were married or in a civil partnership. Of these 70% of Army families, 55% of RAF families, and 35% naval families lived in MoD Service family accommodation (Gray, 2015).. Unique experiences may attend on being in a partnership with a serving professional. This may account for references made to spouses, partners and dependents of asp as members of the wider “armed forces community” in many military produced documents (Gray, 2015).

Common experiences amongst spouses and partners of serving personnel include exposure to aspects of the military culture, the experience of separation, social mobility associated with their partner’s deployment and anxiety when partners are engaged in conflict zones. Moreover in-group identification with other military spouses co-located in military quarters and/or engaged in common social practices. Accordingly transitioning may be a process fraught with as many difficulties for some spouses as for service personnel. That is to say, it may be a process associated with a similar loss of family and way of life.

Ex-ASP in the Criminal justice System

Much of the research concerning the links between serving in the armed forces and offending cautions against drawing firm conclusions from the available data. This is because the exact number

and distribution of ASP in the criminal justice system is largely unknown. In addition the processes by which summary offences under army law are recorded on the police national database has been through a number of iterations and doubts exist about the integrity of the data transfer processes. Initial estimates suggested that a disproportionate number of Ex-ASP were involved in the criminal justice system. More recent and robust estimates, however, suggest that only between 3 and 7% of the prison population have service links (Treadwell, 2010; DASA, 2010; Howard League, 2011; Bray, 2013; HMIP, 2014). In 2013 MacManus et al. explored the offending and serving histories of 13,856 randomly selected, serving and ex-serving UK military personnel. It was found that male serving and ex-service personnel were much less likely than men in the general population in England and Wales to have a criminal conviction (17% versus 28.3%). Thus Brooke and Gau (2015) amongst others suggest military experience generally acts as a buffer against an individual becoming involved in crime.

That said, certain groups of recruits seem to be more at risk of crime than others. Bouffard (2005) identifies those with convictions prior to service life as being most at risk of pre-discharge offending. In the UK early service leavers (who leave before completing 4 years) have been identified as a group that may be especially vulnerable to criminality on discharge from the army. Those compulsory discharged for poor conduct are identified as the highest risk (Iveson et al., 2005).

The Howard League (2011) have also suggested that some peculiarities pertain to the numbers and profile of Ex-ASP in custody in England and Wales. Namely whilst they do not seem to be over-represented, they do tend to be older at the time they are admitted to prison and to be more likely to have been in the army and to have committed violent and sexual offences than those without service backgrounds. Thus whilst 28.6% of civilians were in prison for violent offences and 11% for sex offending, this compared to 32.9% and 25% of Ex-ASP.

The pathways to offending for those Ex-ASP that do offend are complex. The Howard League (2011) identify three overlapping categories of Ex-ASP vulnerable to offending: those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds who had been involved in crime before joining the forces; those who experienced difficulties during service, such as mental health problems or physical injury; and those who had difficulty making the transition from military to civilian life. Three interrelated, factors were commonplace in accounts of pathways into prison given by Ex-ASP involved in the Howard League research. They were social exclusion and isolation, alcohol use and financial pressures. In McManus et al.'s research (2013) experiences of combat and trauma during deployment and heavy drinking were independently identified as being strongly associated with violent behaviour following homecoming. Alcohol misuse played a major role in many crimes, with 44% of violent crimes in a

related earlier study having been committed by those suffering from alcohol misuse (Macmanus et al. 2012).

Here it is apposite to refer to the emergence over recent decades of concerns about mental-ill health and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) amongst Ex-ASP. Offending by servicemen is sometimes explained by reference to mental disorder (Phillips 2014). In 2005, 28.9% of Ex-ASP self-reported as having had a mental health problem, of which depression (48.3%) and stress (37.9%) were the dominant conditions (Ivesen et al., 2005). In February 2011 the National Assembly for Wales Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee published a report on '*Post-traumatic stress disorder for services Ex-ASP*'. It highlighted the possibility that problems existed with the identification of PTSD in Ex-ASP. It noted that in the US the condition is diagnosed more frequently than in the UK and this could be related to better developed screening practices (Howard League, 2011).

However, The King's Centre for Mental Health Research conducted a cohort study into the physical and psychological health of those who took part in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2003. It found that the mental health of Ex-ASP was broadly similar to that of the general population, albeit that their military career provided a very specific context for some presentations. Research suggests that around 3-4% of serving soldiers in the UK go on to experience symptoms of PTSD (Health, wellbeing and Local government Committee 2011; Fear et al 2010). Thus Lyne and Packham (2014) suggest there is only moderate evidence to suggest that mental health problems are more typical in Ex-ASP in the CJS.

Ex-ASP and Domestic Violence/Abuse

Cultural and social norms are clearly influential in shaping individual behaviour, including the use of violence. Accordingly, it is widely considered that the dynamics of particular social contexts make them more probable sites for ideas supportive of the use of violence or coercion against women to emerge. Sexual assaults against women is noted to be more likely in all male settings such as within street, drug, and motorcycle gangs; elite schools; college fraternities; men's athletic programs and military contexts (Harkins and Dixon, 2010).

Some research suggests the prevalence of domestic abuse in Ex-ASP is comparable to the civilian population (Schaffer, 2010) or even lower (Bradley, 2007). The bulk of US research, however,

reports higher rates of domestic abuse amongst some serving and ex-military personnel (Williston, Taft and Van Haasteren, 2015; Tasso et al., 2016; Love et al., 2015; Marshall, Panuzio, & Taft, 2005; Cantos et al., 1994; Cronin, 1995; Griffin and Morgan, 1988; Heyman and Neidig, 1999)

Studies frequently associate violence against women with expectations of male dominance. Thus they understand domestic violence through the prism of gender. From this perspective domestic abuse is understood as perpetrated by men for the purpose of securing power and control over women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). According to Johnson (1995; 2008; 2011), however, this gendered scenario is less common than is suggested. Johnson (2011) distinguishes between acts of intimate terrorism, violent resistance and situational couple violence. Intimate terrorism is a form of domestic abuse that is orientated towards securing power and control in a relationship. Conversely violent resistance is violence which is in response to this oppression. Johnson (2011) suggests these two types of violence are gender asymmetric in that it is men who commit acts of intimate terrorism and women who are predominantly engaged in violent resistance.

However, Johnson (1995; 2011) suggests that by far the most common form of domestic abuse (40% of the cases identified) is 'situational couple violence'. This occurs when couple conflicts become arguments that turn violent. Such violence may involve serious harm, but the harm occasioned is usually mild and is situationally provoked and not part of a broader ongoing attempt by one partner to gain general control over the other. Most controversially, perhaps, it has been suggested such violence is roughly gender-symmetric in terms of perpetration and often has its origins in substance abuse and couple communication issues (Johnson, 2007).

A hyper masculine culture in the military may have some explanatory potential with regards to understanding some forms of domestic abuse in military contexts. Alternatively, it may be argued that the stresses associated with military service is more relevant unit of analysis for understanding domestic abuse by ASP and Ex-ASP (Finley et al., 2010). Regular long overseas deployment and family separation, stress arising from risk of injury and death, geographic mobility and residence in foreign countries would all seem likely to place strains on military family units. Hypervigilance to threat coupled with emotional distancing being used as a way of managing stress might reduce a recruit's ability to manage marital conflict. Inability to find work, loss of purpose, closer proximity, and having to establish new relationships and negotiate new social situations may impact on stress during and after periods of transition from armed service.

In either event, higher levels of education, higher socio-economic status and formal marriage are identified as offering protection against domestic abuse (Bradley, 2007). Conversely alcohol abuse, cohabitation, younger age, attitudes supportive of domestic abuse, having outside sexual partners, experiencing childhood abuse, growing up with domestic violence, and experiencing or perpetrating other forms of violence in adulthood, increased the risk of domestic abuse (Abramsky et al., 2011)

Existing Service provision/arrangements

Domestic violence is a significant criminal justice and social policy issue and the scale of the problem is well documented worldwide (Hague & Mullender, 1996; Harwin, 2006). In the UK it is estimated that one in four women will experience some form of domestic violence at some point in their lives (Coleman et al, 2007). It is known that such experiences can cause serious short and long term physical, emotional and psychological harm to the women and children who bear the brunt of it (Carlson, 2000; Wilke & Vinton, 2005; Smith-Stover, 2005). In the UK, as a result, numerous policy initiatives have sought to address the problem (Rees & Rivett, 2005; Harwin, 2006). Because domestic violence is an issue which does not fit neatly within the responsibilities of one agency or Government department, these initiatives in the civilian sphere have more recently emphasised the importance of so called 'joined up' partnership working (Madoc-Jones et al., 2015).

Problems such partnership have sought to address are associated with managing perpetrator's risk of serious harm to others and a reluctance amongst victims of domestic abuse to disclose their experiences to people in authority (Madoc-Jones et al., 2015). Here victim concerns coalesce around whether they will be believed, repeat victimisation, the losses attendant on disclosing a crime e.g. friendships, housing, financial support from abusive partner, and the effects of disclosure on children. In May 2014 The Welsh Government published the findings from an independent review of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence services in Wales. The review found that available services in Wales could be classed into five main types: those focussed on prevention (stopping violence and abuse from occurring in the first place); those focussed on Identification and referral of affected parties; those focussed on safety and protection; those aimed at increasing safety and protection by dealing with perpetrators; and those that sought to support recovery and social integration. Many agencies in Wales were found to provide more than one of these services and to work with a broad range of victims. Albeit services for women were more common, many were also gender neutral and offered to men and women (Welsh Government, 2014).

Prevention programmes tended to have a public health focus and not to target particular communities or cater for individuals and specific provision for Ex-ASP was not identified. Work at

promoting empowerment, resistance training and assertiveness amongst vulnerable groups was also rarer. Few service providers said they worked with perpetrators of violence (the research did not consider criminal justice agencies). Relevantly a mapping exercise of provision as it existed in Wales found one third of the services delivered only in north Wales. In relation to research with victims the review found many women were still reluctant to approach statutory agencies for fear that information would be shared without their knowledge. “Accessibility, location and stigma” were additional key concerns raised by service users (Madoc-Jones et al., 2015)

Further research exploring or evaluating existing service provision for victim/survivors of domestic crime involving serving military personnel is needed. Civilian police staff may become involved in dealing with instances of domestic abuse and violence. Alternatively instances of abuse and violence may be reported to or come to the attention of the military police and managed within the military system. Under the 2006 Armed Forces Act, commanding officers are required to report only rape and the most serious sexual assaults to military police or the Service Prosecuting Authority. Lesser allegations, e.g. theft, drunkenness and some assaults can be dealt with less formally by the military chain of command. It has been argued that military culture is characterised by strong deference to the chain of command and encouraged protection of colleagues and the ‘unit’ (Marshall et al., 2005). Thus domestic abuse and violence may go unreported or unactioned within the armed services or dealt with in an inappropriately informal manner. Surveys commissioned with UK service staff in 2006, 2007 and 2009, and asking them about their experiences with sexual harassment and whether they had reported it, found 35% of those who had experienced it said that they did not think they would be believed if they complained. (Ministry of Defence 2015). Only 5% had made a formal written complaint. Channel 4 News was told that between 2007 and 2009, 76 allegations of rape were investigated by the Armed Forces. But just two cases ended in conviction- a rate of 2.6 per cent. By comparison, the conviction rate when civilian police investigate, whilst poor itself, is around 6 per cent.¹

That being said, in recent years a number of campaigns have been ongoing to address sexual assault and domestic abuse in the armed forces. Web sites and phone lines have been developed to increase awareness of the issues and highlight sources of support. Service personnel in need of practical or emotional assistance or concerned about family issues may approach civilian or specialist military charities for help. Military welfare support is primarily provided by specialist welfare service staff in the Army or Navy and staff associated with SSAFA in the RAF. Of relevance is that these

¹ <https://www.channel4.com/news/military-investigations-fail-rape-victims>

specialist welfare services operate outside of the chain of command system arguably thereby offering some guarantees of independence.

Currently, in an attempt to ease transition out of the armed forces, ASP are engaged at an early point in their service history in a process called 'Individual Planning and Personal Development (IPPD). This seeks to offer support, advice and education that will enhance professional and personal competencies in anticipation of the inevitable process of transition into civilian life². In addition a Career Transition Partnership (CTP) Resettlement scheme is operated as a partnership between a private sector career development company and the Ministry of Defence to prepare personnel for resettlement. To be eligible for the full package of CTP, personnel need to have served for six years or more.³

Thereafter, organisations such as the British legion and SSAFA maintain a presence in the community and provide services for ex-service staff. SSAFA is the largest military charity and provides a wide range of services including family support groups, mentoring programmes, bereavement support, and a confidential telephone and email helpline service called Forcesline to servicemen and women and their families (Gray, 2015). In addition to this new services have been developed and funded for ex-service staff in the community by charities such as Change steps, Forces in Mind or Help for Heroes.

Statutory services for Ex-ASP have developed apace over the last few years. Presently, in Wales, Ex-ASP are given priority healthcare when the condition arises from their military service and, in support of this, a new specialist Ex-ASP mental health service has been launched within each Health Board area. The Welsh Government is also funding the free 24 hour phone mental health community Advice Listening Line (CALL) which is available to Ex-ASP. Many Local Authorities and schools have identified 'armed forces champions' to assess and develop services for this group of individuals. Barnardo's has recently been funded to provide a bespoke service to families including Ex-ASP called the Families Veteran Support Service⁴.

In custodial settings veteran's wings have been established at some establishments e.g. HMP and YOI Parc. All prisons in Wales have introduced an EX-ASP lead and Veteran in Custody Support

² See <http://www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/23590.aspx>

³ <https://www.ctp.org.uk/>

⁴ http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/corporate_strategy/wales/newyddion/newyddion_6.htm

officers (VICSOS) to help Ex-ASP towards rehabilitation (Welsh Government, 2013). Funded primarily through the MoD covenant Fund, IOM Cymru's SToMP project has been established to co-ordinate delivery of services to EX-ASP within the Criminal Justice System in Wales. The National Probation Service in Wales, the Wales Community Rehabilitation Company and the four Police Service Area in Wales all have identified Ex-ASP champions to promote the needs of Ex-ASP within their organisations.

It has been suggested that some of the features of more successful services for Ex-ASP include that it is provided by staff who are ex-service themselves and they operate apart from mainstream services. (Welsh Government, 2013) That is to say the service is provided by teams that include Ex-ASP and is badged as being specifically for Ex-ASP. According to Welsh Government (2013) the consensus view is that ex-service personnel are likely to be more comfortable and forthcoming with members of staff who have experience and not just knowledge of service life.

Findings

During the course of interviews, respondents gave accounts of military life that provide a context for better understanding their experiences of forming and sustaining healthy non-abusive relationships. Accordingly it is with those accounts that this section begins.

1. *Military life*

Band of Brothers

Particular forms of social relationships defined the military experience for respondents in this research. For example, describing what it means to serve, one respondent commented:

The Armed Forces ... become your family because you are working with these guys and girls, you were doing sport with these guys and girls, you have your meals, you're playing sport with them, and you're socialising with them, and you live with them, you are around these people 24/7 7 days a week you know and so you build up that camaraderie and it's like they then become your family (SP11)

Here, serving in the military is associated with being in a family. The respondent does not refer to the same differentiation of roles and responsibilities that might exist, however, in an extended family. Rather the account speaks to fraternal experiences.

A number of respondents referred to their experience of serving by drawing on a similar fraternal constructs. For example another respondent suggested

I was in nine years, ...what did I get out of the service I can say all of my close friends, you get the kind of lifestyle that you can't actually get anywhere else ... it's a social we are a very very close-knit family. (SP2)

Here too, the family analogy is used. However, notwithstanding the ubiquity of family life the respondent identifies the serving 'family' experience as unique. It is distinguished by a focus on friendships and fraternal constructs.

The term fraternal (between brothers) is preferred by us over sororal (between sisters) because most of our respondents were male and accounts of relationship and bonds between military

personnel prioritised male concerns. Hence one respondent talking about the uniqueness of service life suggested

I think there is very much that spirit of we fight together we train together we slept together drink together, we're very tight, that's seen at a unit level, in infantry companies, squadrons and that, there is a rivalry between platoons and there might be rivalry between the companies and their squadrons... so it is a funny thing you know that there's fighting between them but I think it's just that general feeling of tightness with their own, maybe that's more of an army thing (SP13)

Of interest here is the way relationships are rendered meaningful by references to traditional markers of maleness-willingness to violence and heavy drinking. Some of our respondents were female. Nonetheless their accounts of service life also referenced male concerns. For example one female respondent commented:

"Your regiment is like your family, you live and sometimes die with each other, you have to have your back in pubs and places like that... when you're out even though you might have had a falling out with you colleagues in work if you were out and then a fight breaks out and that person is getting a kicking you step in and look after them even though the fact is you're not talking to them. (SP6)

An account by another female respondent is interesting because it throws into relief specific aspects of the accounts of the majority of respondents. Describing her military experience a female respondent commented:

you've got to rely on that person who is next to you and you've got to be able to trust that person is going to protect you as much as you will protect them and that's when you get the camaraderie and that bond it is like a band of brother or a band of sisters together because it is like a family people cry with you if an incident that occurred after you've had a debrief they will cry with you you know it's like you cry with very you sleep with them you eat with them it is a family unit (SP11)

Albeit a realistic primary concern in some military context may be with physical threat, it is of note here that camaraderie is associated with a reciprocated willingness to be violent in a defence of each other. That being noted, this respondent was the only one who referenced emotional support in her construction of her putative 'family' experience. For all other respondents a goal orientated culture

was described that, in keeping with traditional ideas about how men should behave, did not reward emotional displays:

Being infantry they teach you that asking for help is weak, most men don't really ask for help because it's a sign of weakness isn't it. So I had the mentality not to ask for help and I still won't ask for help now. (P7)

You just got on with it and nobody actually said how they were feeling, it was just like fuck it it happens, move on. (P2)

Regime and Routine

Respondents with military experience referred positively to being part of clearly defined chain of command

people like that sort of thing they like to feel part of something bigger and it comes in that you know the army the regimented system the regiment is seen as an extension of the family some people like that and it makes them feel comfortable and wanted (SP13)

Here the respondent also compares experiences in 'the army' with being in a family. Some structuration, however, is identified within the family associated with 'something bigger', the 'regimented system' and 'regiment'.

In the following extract a similar reference to structure is made by a prisoner:

I miss the boys a lot of the boys I miss, and you know, the way things were done, now you have got to sort of fend for yourself but in there everything was sort of put to you, dentists doctors all things like that, I like structure and routine (P1)

Here, the speaker refers to a sense of security originating from fraternity but also being part of a structure and routine. The following respondent also eulogises routine:

I did change you more towards a structure and planning things out and having a good routine which I tried to keep on top of. The people in mess were always keeping things tidy we were in a good routine, the army keeps you in a good routine. It was good (P10)

Respondents referred to their location within the structure and routine being associated with a lack of responsibilities. For example, in the next extract lack of responsibilities associated with 'mess life' is contrasted with the responsibilities attendant on being 'home'.

I have everything on tap, why would I want to come home sometimes? It was great, it was like a travel lodge have my own room, my own Wi-Fi, my own meals cooked and served to me because that's what mess life is like. Then I'd come home and I'm having to do all the chores around the house, back in the real world and it's just like Jesus Christ, I'm back. Its different stuff, it's a shock to the system. (SP4)

In the following extract the respondent describes life for a serviceman inside the army

The army gives you everything as well and this is the risk, so if people go in the army at sixteen and they show you how to shave, how to wash, how to shower, how to iron , how to cook themselves possibly, pretty much how to behave, how to think you could argue They do become quite reliant to a certain extent almost being told what to do or behaving a certain way being a soldier (SP13)

Of particular note here is that the soldier is described as being told by others how things are done. He is presented as embedded within a system and set of relationships which assumes responsibility for the totality of his behaviour.

Almost all our prisoner respondents hankered for a return to military service. In that regard a military diaspora seemed to obtain, associated with a longing to re-establish lost friendships and a routine that once characterised respondent's lives:

I wish I could go back (P4)

I'd go back tomorrow if I could (P2)

2. Experiences of forming and sustaining healthy non-abusive relationships.

Intimate relationships: Separation

Respondents identified challenges in respect of forming or maintaining healthy relationships for ASP. For some, relationships were assessed as being incompatible with service life, primarily because partners could be separated for long periods of time:

The down side, you are away from home so that's good for some boys in the earlier days when you are single but when you build up your family it puts a lot of strain on that (SP4)

I was single anyway when I was in the army when I joined up but I could see being away and that it was harder for you to form a relationship, like if I had children when I was in the army I would have struggled a bit more about going away and that... finding a relationship is hard because you come home for a couple of weeks or a weekend and go back then so you can't really settle and you are moving camps (P10)

The army is more of a single person thing, I don't think you can have a stable relationship, unless you are married and they are following you to wherever you go but for a single person to just have a girlfriend, I don't think it works. I didn't for me any way. It's the same if you were working away or whatever, if you are constantly away your girlfriends going to get lonely. She's not going to stay by you I don't think. (P1)

For a number of respondents, separation was associated with concerns about their own or their partner's fidelity.

I never had a girlfriend in the army because either their going to cheat on you, or you're going to cheat on them. I've seen lots of lads lose it on a night out when they found out their girlfriend had been cheating, they start a fight over something silly (P8)

“I cheated on them, but that’s how it goes, the lads egg you on to do it kind of thing, it (relationships) just doesn’t work” (P6)

It fell apart, she was sleeping with other people, I was trying to make it work (P7)

The difficulties associated with separation were identified by some respondents as obtaining not only in relation to servicemen and women, but their partners. Hence one respondent commented:

Let’s take a female partner wife with a male husband who is serving abroad that person might be doing all of the child caring all the after-school activities on their own it must be a lonely place very difficult (SP13)

Relationships and Work

Respondents spoke of several challenges to establishing and maintaining healthy relationships as service staff transitioned out of armed service. In most cases the problems that were discussed were understood to have their origins in an inability to find or maintain employment. For example one prisoner commented

No the first few years were brilliant, we got on really well, we had our daughter, everything was fine, it was normal. I was doing a xxxxx apprenticeship, done that for four years, had a bit of trouble with that.... he laid me off, and that was it, everything just spiralled out of control then really.(P1)

Here, problems the respondent went on to identify with drug and alcohol misuse and maintaining a healthy relationship are presented as outcomes of unemployment. Similarly another prisoner respondent commented:

Basically I left the military for a family, tried to find a job, couldn’t find a job which left my stress levels raised, when I was stressed I was acting differently because of all the pressure on me, so me and her went our different waysmy stress levels went up, I couldn’t find a job, bills were coming in. (P7)

Transitioning well was often explained with reference to finding work. One service provider was asked if he had any problems with his relationships after transitioning answered:

No I don’t think I did, mainly because I came out and got the job I wanted, I went into xxxx (SP5)

Most prisoner respondents either described themselves as having been transitioning well when they were working or imagined a future where things would be better if they found work

I'm going to leave here and find a job and from there I can start building (P3)

My new plan is that xxx course so I'll just get that done and I'll ring people up and even if I have to work weekends, or nights and do really rubbish jobs I will just to prove myself and get things right. (P1)

In the absence of work several respondents identified that difficulties could arise in relationships:

We were in the house together all the time, I had nothing to do and so we were under each other's feet and I was fidgety, that's doubly bad for a para whose used to doing things- either doing something or getting ready to do something (P6)

One way of understanding respondents' experiences with employment is with reference to its structuring nature and the positive evaluation of routine during periods of military service. Almost all our Ex-ASP respondents spoke of being more comfortable in situations where a regime or routine obtained. Thus, on being in prison, one respondent commented:

you shouldn't say it really but in prison I enjoy being you know I'm driven back to prison because prison is like routine you know whereas outside life is not you've got to work hard to make it like routine. In here it's all like the army you know you have to get up at a certain time, you eat at a certain time, it's a very similar atmosphere (p1)

Whilst another stated

when I came to jail I had structure in my life again, discipline in my life again and I wouldn't say I thrived on it but I felt more comfortable in jail than outside of jail... I don't like admitting it to the authorities and probation and the like but I feel safer in prison. Structure discipline, help. (P11)

Relationships: Routine and Regime

This preference for routine and structure, however, was considered potentially problematic for some Ex-ASP. One respondent suggested that in its absence they could engage in anti-social conduct

So I come back to Wales and a couple of days with my parents I was like I can't handle this. I used to get up at 5 o'clock in the morning have a shave go for a run be in the gym for 8 o'clock. But now at 9 o'clock I'm sitting there going "what do I

do now?" My parents were still working then, my sister was at school, I was sitting in the house thinking "what do I do... I can't like float" I've got to be structured because I get bored very easy and when I get bored I get into trouble (P2)

Attempts to implement a regime could be problematic in some family contexts. Thus one respondent commented:

I would say particularly then with the veteran who has been brought up very institutionalised way of life, it is all about control, controlling what happens in his own home or in his own life and that can be carried on once they have left the military so he likes things regimented, things done at a certain time and that can then be perceived likely as domestic abuse (SP8)

Provider respondents suggested that routines could be less negotiable in the eyes of some armed services personnel than civilians. Thus it was suggested, the preference for a routine could at times be linked to relationship problems:

For a military man if you've got a meeting at say 2 or 1400 hours as we might say then the meeting is at 2, not 2.15 or 2.30. I think expecting everyone to have that level of discipline can be seen as quite controlling in environments where the same mentality isn't there (SP18)

In the following extract, a respondent refers to problems arising when barriers arise to following his preferred routine

So now I'm home, hoping to be asleep by 9.00pm but I'm still up by 6.00am to train, I'd want to go to sleep at 9 and she's watching tele, watching big brother and all that crap that's on tele these days and I'm getting all fidgety and sometimes an argument would blow up because she's used to that, used to having her own way (SP4)

A probation staff member responsible for running domestic violence programmes gave the following account of Ex-ASP he had met having a preference for routine and this being associated with the potential for domestic abuse:

From my perspective it can seem quite cliché but they seem very regimented the ones that have served in the army. If you are late starting a group, or if the tutor is unwell so they have got to have another tutor, they will mention it, they will

pick up on it if a break is a different time than it was the previous week, they will mention it. It's almost as if, a lot of the cases I've noticed, the partner says they will be home at 11 o'clock and it's 12:30 and they come home, and that's when there's trouble. The partner must text every hour that's when there's trouble.
(SP9)

Another prisoner gave the following account of how a preference for routine might impact on relationships:

When we split up she sort of said I was very controlling, she never mentioned it in the years we were together but I had a good relationship with me ex-father in law... and he sort of told me a few things that she had been saying. That I used to control her a lot, I never thought I did and I look back and I can't see how I did because she never spoke to me about it... It does bug me, how she thought I was controlling. I am very regimented as a person everything has to have its place maybe a little bit OCD that is just how I am, how I've always been.... maybe things had to be done a certain way...I don't know.(P5)

Relationships and Responsibilities

As indicated earlier, military life was understood by many Ex-ASP to be associated with having few responsibilities. Making decisions, instead of responding to orders was a challenge for some after they were discharged:

I landed in Cardiff train station I had all my kit stood on Cardiff train station, I remember the day, and I stood there and thought what the fuck do I do now? I literally stood there thinking there is nobody telling me what to do. I was standing there thinking I don't know what to do now (P2)

In relation to managing new responsibilities one respondent suggested:

When they are in the armed services they are wrapped in cotton wool a bit because they are just focusing on the task and the Armed Forces will try and do a lot of the mundane stuff for them so they can just concentrate on the service. When they leave I don't really think that it is adequate what is provided for them when they leave.... Just anecdotally I've heard a lot of stories about people who've joined particularly the army they are quite young and then they have left and they don't know how to change a plug, they don't know they had to pay a bill, and they didn't know what to do with the electrics, just really simple stuff

you know that anybody else would be able to do- and they just can't be self-sufficient (SP6)

Another respondent suggested that problems could arise for some Ex-ASP because they would be accustomed to bespoke services available for them in military settings:

But I think some people do suffer when they leave the military because they find it difficult to convert to a civilian world where you know if they wanted to book a Dr's appointment they can't just walk in to the medical centre. They actually have to physically go and wait, and the dentist- the same, and everything really you know they have to find out for themselves, learn (SP13)

In turn a prisoner recalled:

When I left I was age 26 and I couldn't use a washing machine or never had to fend for myself as of such, in the army you are looked after (P12)

The problems this could give rise to in the context of a relationship was largely associated with stress

You've got to understand it isn't about one thing, if your adjusting to a new life and new life, new friends perhaps, then all of this and then on top of all that you don't know about how things work and it's just more stress on top of stress and that's obviously going to lead to problems isn't it (SP19)

Heavy Drinking and Relationships

A number of respondents identified behaviours that whilst unproblematic in a military context, could cause problems for establishing and maintaining healthy relationships for Ex-ASP. Chief amongst these was heavy drinking. As the following extract illustrates, heavy drinking was associated with military service.

Yes I think everybody, people, the majority of people I know who have left the forces have problems, with drink or violence or unhappy. Usually drink I've come across... I don't know it's just the mentality with paras they drink like a fish, drink hard play hard, there's that sort of mentality now, soldiers are drinking a lot more. When your tour its better it's easier but when you haven't got a tour to do and you haven't got anyone to discipline you it's out the window isn't it. (P3)

In turn continued heavy drinking on discharge from the armed forces was associated with crime:

Drinking literally we all drink and that's my problem drinking, a lot of it comes from drinking, ask anyone in here and they will tell you when they committed their crime they were under the influence of alcohol, apart from the ones that are into drugs, so drink and drugs straight away they are your issues, they are your triggers. I wouldn't be here if I didn't drink 100%. If I didn't join the army I could probably guarantee I wouldn't be here as well. (P4)

Arguably crime brings its own problems for a relationship but heavy drinking was also associated with particular relationship difficulties. One respondent suggested:

it's often the case where a familiar one usually is when they come home after work they go to the pub with their mates and their partner calls and says can you come back at 8 o'clock for tea but he keeps drinking with his mates and then he comes back 11 completely tanked up and that's when it happens you see it where they are more comfortable with mates and pick their friends above their partner (SP9)

Whilst reflecting on his marriage another said:

We split up loads of times because of my drinking (P11)

Heavy drinking was identified as a mechanism some Ex-ASP used to manage stress. Interestingly, in many accounts drinking was described as addressing a lack of opportunities to talk through issues of concern, as in the following two extracts:

When we come back I had a lot of problems and I found it very difficult to talk about it. Even now it's quite raw. That probably when I started drinking heavier than I had before. In the mid early 90's that's how everyone reacted because everyone reacts, you are supposed be a hard man or whatever. (P2)

so drugs and alcohol is a coping mechanism really, it's an escape for them to get away from what they are thinking ...but it's the culture of it as well, they go away on training and things like that, they come home and the first thing is lets go to

be pub and it's the culture around it like that so when they come out of the military they kind of think they are on one big leave. (SP14)

Military Training and Relationships

Some respondents associated relationship difficulties in the home with military training, culture and hypervigilance to threat. One concern was that training might inculcate a confrontational attitude towards others

I was never drawn to conflict and as soon as I got into the military- boom! And in the military people change they never back down to somebody and if somebody argues with you- you argue back. If someone punches you and throws something at you- you punch them back. It's the way a lot of the people from the military have been taught (P4)

In the following account, domestic violence is explained with reference to a tendency to react violently to any perceived physical threat

But I think domestic violence is a big problem in the armed forces because you don't know when to switch off. When an argument comes, if someone swings for you, you swing straight back- you don't think "is it a woman". (P5)

Respondents suggested that transitioning out of armed service could often be associated with problems communicating with partners. Intimacy is predicated on some self-disclosure but it was suggested military culture could render self-disclosure, and the vulnerability attendant on this, problematic for some Ex-ASP. One service provider suggested:

There is a fairly macho self-belief about that's how a man should be, there's not necessarily sort of, I think they have a lot of respect for women in many ways - they've worked alongside them in a training capacity, in a combat capacity, but I think they are not very good at being looked after if you know what I mean. In a traditional role they would see that as a bit of a weakness...I think in terms of the sort of traditional balance of perhaps a woman wanting to be a bit caring and wanting to know what's going on in a man's mind and all the traditional things- they are not very comfortable with that, they are more used to the culture of military service where they can deal with things by not dealing with it- by having a joke about it (SP1)

In a similar vein another respondent suggested:

You have a situation where a normal person, someone you are with wants to talk, but that's the last thing you want to do, you've learned to bottle it up or just get on with it -so your partner might say might be called distant or aloof but that's how it is in the army (SP19)

Asked about how serving affected his relationships one respondent suggested a process of physical and emotional distancing occurred as a result of army training:

Yes it ruined a lot of them...because you're not always there are you, and you change your whole way of thinking, how you process things, how you are. You start being more distant with people, even in here as well, but my relationships all fell apart because I can't be bothered with them... I didn't want to be close to anybody I didn't really want to rely on anybody (P4)

The following respondent describes a process of avoiding closeness with others:

... I didn't want to ask him (relative) for help if you like because I didn't want to seem weak in front of him. I think that was a big problem as well, seeming weak and asking for help, you know being a burden (P11)

3. *Interaction with statutory and non-statutory organisations prior to entering the criminal justice system*

Whilst provider respondents referred to services available to help Ex-ASP transition out of armed service, prisoner respondents suggested little help had been made available to them and what was offered was limited to help in finding employment.

In this regard one respondent commented:

But because I served 5 years I wasn't, I couldn't get the full resettlement, I got a 5 day resettlement, a very basic, digital, you write a CV, they test your grammar and English and maths before they set you off, so very little basically.(P7)

As the following comment illustrate, other respondents also suggested that the help that was available as they transitioned out of the armed forces was limited.

No it was a case of "here's the door". There was no aftercare no signposting to agencies to get help with employment or anything like that, nothing. (P11)

I was in for 5 and a half years and I didn't see any help, no one tells you about the help, there's not enough information saying like if you are in trouble there is this help or if you need to speak to somebody, or maybe a lot of people won't go looking for it. Even when I got out of the army there is no one saying "this agency is SSAFA and this is Help for Heroes", there no body saying "there is any help for you", and no one goes looking for it- they just sit there and let it build up inside them, (P1).

They show you courses and that but no one really sits you down and says "this is how it's going to be" and like a plan...No one says like "this is what you have got to do now". There was no plan set out. I know everyone is different, but there should be someone that sits you down and says "these are the things you need to do". They say "oh you're getting out the army now, here is your thing for getting out, if you need anything else come and see us" I didn't know what to do if you like (P10)

I didn't have anyone to talk to, we had a big piss up on a Wednesday with the boys, handed my kit in on the Thursday, landed in Bristol and then Cardiff and that was it, they gave me the contact number for the Marine Association and the British Legion and that was it. (P2)

I was under the impression that for him to say I've been out to Afghanistan, Iraq anywhere else there would have been some kind of proper briefing and some support when they come out and all the stuff they need. That actually isn't the case even though the military say it is. They are given a short film to watch and then "contact this number if you need any help", it's not really good enough (SP15)

No respondent suggested that help with relationship difficulties was available. In relation to accessing help through the chain of command when difficulties arose one respondent suggested:

You couldn't walk over to the sergeant and say "by the way this happened with me and my missus" he'd say 'f*** off', they don't care (P4)

None of the respondents owned to having contacted service welfare agencies regarding relationship difficulties or domestic abuse:

Let's be honest if you hit your missus right, you can't go and speak to the police about it because you will go to jail. Bottom line you can't go and speak to anyone else about it (P8)

Our research suggests reasons why Ex-ASP may have had limited contact with welfare agencies over relationship difficulties. One of these might be that the issue was not always considered relevant within military contexts. In civilian contexts, domestic abuse and violence is known to be a significant social problem, immune to informal social control and notwithstanding recent improvements, something criminal justice agencies have struggled to identify and respond to effectively. The weight of existing research would commend a conclusion that domestic abuse and violence would be an issue of, at least, equal significance in military contexts. Yet several respondents informed us domestic violence was not an issue in the military. Explaining why he thought this one respondent said

-if it came to light I'm sure senior officers would be appalled and react to it. You have got to remember that Mr Smith who works at the steelworks, if he makes the glaring mistake, he might lose his job. If we make a mistake then somebody could get killed, but more likely I could end up in prison because in the military

service if you turn up late you can be locked up so we have a strong sense of discipline, so I feel it is less likely to happen, and when it does happen, I can assure you that people from within their own peer group, it is unacceptable and you wouldn't want to go through life with everybody knowing that you knock your wife around because you wouldn't last two minutes. It would be worse than if you're outside I imagine (SP2)

Another respondent was asked if they come across domestic violence and much or abuse in their work and suggested

I've not come across it, no, maybe one or two in over 30 years (SP19)

And another provider respondent commented:

It's not something I'm particularly aware of...., I don't get see the other halves and the wives husbands, other guys' girlfriends too much, and not particularly. I've had some soldiers come to me and told me about things where they have had a marital breakup and their other half was in court, but that's quite unusual really. I'm not aware there is a particular problem, I can't really sort of give you anything useful on this (SP13)

There are obvious reasons why some of our provider respondents might be unsighted on issues of domestic abuse and violence. As indicated earlier, a defining feature of the military experience for some of our respondents was a camaraderie that did not necessarily support emotional displays and self-disclosures.

In support of the suggestion that self-disclosure of problems would be more limited, we were told by several respondents that they would be unlikely to disclose relationship difficulties to others. For example, prisoner respondents made the following comments about sharing their difficulties and accessing help:

I'm still not going to access help when I get out you know, I can provide for myself, I'll do it myself. (P7)

No, I wouldn't have done (*shared their difficulties*) ... I would have just dealt with it myself, I wouldn't have looked for any help or anything. ..Yeah that's just me I think but there wasn't anywhere I could see where we could go and get help. But because I wasn't looking for it I probably wouldn't have found it. (P1)

I wasn't very close to my family anyway but it just got worse, I didn't want to be close to anybody I didn't really want to rely on anybody ...But I wouldn't have spoken to anybody, I just got on with it. (P4)

No, I kind of didn't know... I probably wouldn't seek it up because I was a hard bastard and I was a man (P1)

One provider had the following to say about the tendency of Ex-ASP to avoid self-disclosure and be self-reliant

I think that seems to be a common trend with quite a lot of the older ex-army. They were a bit of a lone warrior sort of thing and they say I don't need anyone else, I'm capable on my own (SP9)

An additional reason why Ex-ASP may have had limited contact with welfare agencies in respect of relationship difficulties is that an informal approach to managing problematic behaviour in the military was described as prevailing. Referring to how domestic abuse and violence might be dealt with on a military base one respondent suggested:

If the police had to enter a property they would report it to the duty officer then the welfare officer then it would come down to you because it's your soldier involved, which would lead then to a quiet chat, without prying too much... It was all kept in house so other people didn't get involved. Not that it gets brushed under the table, people probably are aware of it and like to think that a quiet chat because it's been identified and that it would affect that soldiers career if it carried on that maybe that would be a solution (SP4)

Other respondents suggested that practices obtained that could lead to domestic abuse or violence being under reported:

I've come across it in my role and its difficult because what happens is in the armed forces they cover it up, they will take the man away put them somewhere and cover it up and its only when they get out that that's when it gets reported and the wife thinks I told the family officer and they did nothing about it so she thinks I've got to shut up and crack on (SP11)

A respondent with experience in the military police suggested

I mean every now and again we will get an incident where Armed Forces personnel have been fighting in the Pub but we don't get domestic abuse reported to us. ...when they are serving they try to keep everything in-house they try to keep it to themselves because I suppose there's that reputational risk as well which they are trying to protect....Anecdotally from sort of third sector support groups they tell me that domestic abuse is a real problem on the military bases but ...nobody is interested (SP6)

One respondent suggested that where incidents of domestic abuse were dealt with informally, then a reluctance to report problems would then carry over into the community:

I think people aren't coming forward and perhaps victims not recognising what they are experiencing because it might well be the norm for them now (SP16)

Stakeholder respondents working with adults and children who had experienced domestic abuse were of the opinion there were challenges involved in joint working with military staff to address concerns about domestic abuse. For example one respondent suggested:

I think there's a certain element of keeping things in house there an almost unwritten confidentiality which sits outside the normal confidentiality remit. I think there is some scepticism about our knowledge or experience like what can we bring that they can't do themselves so for all those reasons really. (SP20)

Another respondent was more negative about the possibility of joint working to intercept any spiral into domestic abuse, suggesting:

The military doesn't share its secrets- it deals with them itself (SP7)

4. *Ability to intervene and what interventions would be of benefit in supporting Ex-ASP in avoiding domestic abuse*

Most non-statutory respondents considered their agency was able to recognise and act to address early signs of relationship difficulties and prevent domestic abuse effectively. Thereafter they understood they could provide a service to deal with relevant issues. This was because, for the most part, respondents largely understood domestic abuse and violence as 'situational'. Thus the services identified as relevant for both preventative and crisis intervention work were those they provided already, focussed either on addressing social isolation via peer support schemes or, alternatively, signposting Ex-ASP to specialist agencies to deal with health or social problems e.g. alcohol misuse, financial or mental health problems.

One respondent suggested:

If we come across it we can provide the necessary referrals, so we are good at signposting to agencies, housing if its housing XXX if its alcohol or drugs, and accessing pots of money if that's needed and for most things we've seen it all before so it's not anything new to us (SP10)

Similarly another commented

We can assess the situation and make the referrals that are necessary, if it's PTSD then we can refer to the NHS or if its problems with the school then maybe it's the veterans school liaison people (SP20)

Referring to the range of services one agency could offer another respondent suggested:

We can do the forms to get them brown goods, white goods, vouchers and things, peer mentoring support, we help with housing as well, and basically we can help them with anything that they need help with. If they need referrals into veterans NHS we do that, xxxx we deal with, we deal with all the organisations. We do whatever the veteran wants us to do, and the family member as well because we can pass them over if they need counselling (SP2)

A number of respondents suggested if more general help and support was provided to Ex-ASP then the potential for domestic abuse would not arise:

if the veterans were supported properly when they came out I think there will be less inclination for hardship they wouldn't have the excuse of I haven't got anything, I haven't got anywhere to live... if we looked after them properly I don't think it's a rocket science I think it's common sense (SP2)

This general help was considered to be especially under developed in respect of families of Ex-ASP:

I just think that in terms of what you were saying about the difficulties of relationships it really is a problem even if there was a sort of I don't know telephone support system or something people like mums and girlfriends, I've had guys in here and then their mum's on the phone who have been really upset or had mums phoned me 'he's just drunk and fallen out of bed, he's saying he wants to go back to prison, he can't cope' and you just think -they're not the clients but they can't get much help , where can you get help from (SP1)

We were told of one group set up by a military charity specifically for partners of Ex-ASP. The relevant respondent described its utility as follows:

they are all women in the partners group, there's 14 of them and when you start talking about a veteran, and this has been said before, she said "if I didn't know different, and I was talking about any veteran, I would think you have been spying on me for the past 10 years because that's exactly what they are like" and then one wife would say that and then another would say 'that's just what it's like' too, and that's good for them to have a comradeship (SP8)

The services on offer in the non-statutory sector was described as largely reactive to expressed need- that is to say, they were orientated around crisis intervention and provided to Ex-ASP who were referred or approached non statutory services for help:

We don't go looking. We raise awareness, in doctor's surgeries and we advertise ourselves there but we don't go visiting every veteran we know or anything like that, some people don't want to be reminded, they don't want our help (SP12)

Reflecting on services, more assertive approaches were identified as potentially beneficial by one respondent

I think probably we would need to target military personnel to be fair through presentations and talks etc. I mean in our services we don't particularly go out

looking for people, they come to us and that works with a client group that kind of know us, things are very different in the military (SP7)

Other respondents suggested awareness of their services needed to be raised in the community to ensure referrals were made when needs associated with Ex-ASP were identified

my previous experience was that we were coming across them veterans who were being involved and were the perpetrators of domestic abuse and they were just getting the standard response the generic response and not recognising the fact that they were veterans. You are bearing in mind a lot of veterans only want to speak to the veterans because they have an understanding of their experiences (SP6)

Interestingly several phone lines exist for Ex-ASP to use, but nonetheless several respondent suggested one was needed indicating better publicity around existing resources for Ex-ASP might be necessary:

I think like a phone line or something like that you have ChildLine and ones for mental health why not have a fucking helpline or phone line for us.(P4)

Non-statutory respondents understood the peer nature of the support they provided could uniquely encourage disclosure of problems such as those that might lead on to domestic abuse and motivate Ex-ASP to address the issues. Thus one respondent suggested:

they always tell me the same thing which is you know ex-military personnel they just because their experiences are so extraordinary they will only speak to people who are aware and some of the xxxxxx will say that they've got their own language, and if you can't speak their language they're not going to engage with you; and if you haven't come from that background you're just not going to know where to start. (SP20)

In support of such assertions on prisoner said:

It's easier to speak to somebody like yourself - an ex-military but it's hard speaking to civilians because they just look at you like that sometimes. You get some coming the jail that's looking civilians and they just come and speak to you as a you are just an animal in a cage caged at as the never mind the person never mind who I am that is, one time.(P4)

However, common though the perception was that military people best related to other military people, accounts of this phenomenon hinted at the potential for expectations and norms associated with military culture to then structure conversations:

When I meet guys for the first time I'll tell them my military background, ... but one of the first questions they will ask me is what rank are you and you can see they are working out how do I pitch myself to this guy. And trying to say to them "I'm a civilian" but I've had guys that have called me "sir" (P17)

In the above extract, it is suggested that it is not unusual when two- Ex-ASP meet for an attempt to be made to resurrect hierarchical military relations. Much of this 'identity work' occurred off tape as researchers were escorted along with prisoners to interview facilities.

Because domestic violence was viewed as largely situational, for many non-statutory providers the need for a specialist intervention to tackle gender based domestic abuse did not arise. For those for whom it did, however, opinion was divided on how any specialist intervention might be delivered. One service provider who had military experience suggested:

We can signpost but we trained them to be killers so we are the last people who should be training them to be normal again it's somebody else's responsibility (SP6)

Whilst another suggested;

I don't see any reason why with the right training we couldn't do more in this area (SP18)

Some statutory respondents were less positive about the ability of non-statutory staff to engage effectively in the joint working that is a hallmark of civilian based response to prevent or address domestic abuse. Here, as mentioned previously, the secrecy that could prevail in military contexts could be considered a barrier:

We have had some debates with some of the forces charities who feel they do provide ...support ...but our experience lies working with women and families andsome of the veterans charities will say well we have been providing it for 130 years but what they don't provide is what we do and there's a lack of trust (SP15)

But in addition, it was more likely that statutory respondents would understand domestic abuse through the prism of gender and therefore to understand it as an issue requiring more joined up and specialist responses than non-statutory charities were currently able to provide

There's a real potential for problems here when you don't necessarily work in with domestic violence all the time, perpetrators can make it seem like it's not anything to do with anything important, that it's about her not listening or going out or PTSD, but behind it all he's been violent before (SP18)

I think the controlling elements might be easily dismissed as a hangover from or just part of being a disciplined soldier and nothing to do with domestic violence (SP9)

Some respondents gave accounts which suggested referral pathways to provide early intervention to address domestic abuse were being developed. One criminal justice professional suggested

I pointed out that it would be better if we could have another referral pathway... before somebody was arrested so when they first saw or came to our attention we were recognising that somebody needs some sort of support and intervention. So I started to have conversations with people... I set up an automatic electronic referral on our computer systems with (mentions military charity) (SP11)

Another suggested preventative approach could be initiated earlier and at the point Ex-ASP are beginning the transition process:

I suppose it's around you know perhaps maybe trying to engage in the military themselves. So if they are not going to acknowledge it as a current problem, to sell it to them "well okay- it's not a problem now, but when they come out and they are in civvy street, and these new pressures they are under, and they are not being kind of told what to do anymore". It's quite a challenge so to be able to engage with personnel before they leave the services so at least they are going away with information (SP16)

Similarly a prisoner suggested an awareness raising programme with those transitioning out of armed service was required

Courses, there could be courses, there are resettlement plans but I know boys that have never seen a resettlement plan in their life. Things like that focus groups or a class you could sit in just once before you leave. Saying this will happen then the next thing then the next thing and if you're feeling fucked off call these. (P4)

In relation to his violent offending this prisoner respondent suggested there needed to be more help with managing aggression on discharge from armed service:

they're the ones that are training you and then just go no, they don't teach you how to turn it off, they teach you to turn it on, turn the aggression on, I like to fight you see and I ended up fighting and you don't know when to stop, I knew when to stop before I went in the army and now I didn't know when to stop. They never teach you when to stop it's either you or them that's the way it was. (P4)

Discussion:

Qualitative research is associated with some fairly obvious limitations that preclude any simple generalization of the findings. However, as data collection drew to an end there were consistencies appearing within and between respondent accounts and emerging themes seemed supported by aspects of the existing literature. Shapiro (2007) suggests that where qualitative research is pursued diligently, there may be an argument for concluding that some of the findings in one context may be transferrable to other similar contexts.

It is not novel to suggest that the dispositions and gender identities fashioned during military service, or the challenges associated with transitioning out of the army, can impinge upon post service life. What is perhaps novel is a report exploring some of the significance of this for subsequent criminal behaviour and especially healthy relationships and domestic abuse. Moreover one that considers what sort of activates might be useful in preventing a slide by some Ex-ASP into domestic abuse and future contact with the criminal justice system.

This report focusses on particular EX-ASP in custody. It should not be read as supporting the conclusion that Ex-ASP as inherently more criminal, violent, and prone to relationship difficulties or domestic abuse than non-EX-ASP. Moreover that either the military welfare or justice systems are necessarily any worse at dealing with domestic abuse than the civilian welfare and Criminal Justice Systems. Domestic violence and abuse is prevalent in society. The armed forces are apart from, but also situated within, that society. Civilian statutory organisations continue to be criticised for failures to meet the needs of victims who experience domestic abuse (Madoc-Jones et al., 2015)

That being said, as Gray (2015) suggests, unless it is recognised that much of the foundations that can underpin abuse and oppression of women may be relatively easily reproduced in military contexts, dealing effectively with domestic abuse and violence may become more difficult. Moreover unless incidents of domestic abuse in military contexts are dealt with openly and robustly, serving staff are robbed of the symbolic feedback on what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and the risks that domestic abuse may become a feature of some EX-ASPs lives will not be minimised.

A finding in this research is that respondents largely reflected positively on their military careers and many hankered for a return to the armed forces. Several authors have drawn on Goffman's theory of total institutions (1961) and institutionalisation to understand the experience and draw of military

life. Others have made reference to a military 'diaspora'. Goffman (1961) describes a total institution as a place where a large number of similarly situated people, cut off from the wider community lead an enclosed, formally administered life. According to Brubaker (2005), the use of the term 'diaspora' has widened in recent times. Diaspora originally referred to the dispersal or movement of a population from its original homeland. However, a defining feature of diaspora communities is that though they are dispersed, they are characterized by a strong collective memory and commitment to their common history or heritage (Brubaker, 2005). Respondents in this research referenced diasporic feelings and most prisoners wished for a return to the security afforded by military life. Moreover many had sought, or were seeking opportunities to re-create, aspects of that security in ongoing contact with fellow Ex-ASP.

Respondents reported difficulties attendant on the process of transitioning out of the armed forces. Most referred in some way or another to a feeling of loss. Changes in the cultural landscape have been identified over the last few decades (Giddens, 1991). It is argued that certainties have given way to uncertainties, group identity has given way to individualism and the security and stable self-identity that many people crave can no longer be found in one's place within the social structure. Instead identity derives from individual activities which may be focused on dress, hobbies or possessions (Gill et al., 2005). In a military context, 'Soldier', however, may be an 'identity' that is readily identifiable and can provide succour against insecurity. Conversely, however, it may delay a deeper insecurity for some individuals when they are discharged from armed service and the wherewithal to maintain the 'soldier' identity is no longer available and a new identity has to be forged.

There were some commonalities amongst our prisoner respondent group. Our prisoner respondents were largely from more disadvantaged backgrounds and communities. They were young recruits and most were discharged early. They were typical of Ex-ASPs who have been found to be a higher risk of custody and violence including domestic violence and this commends consideration of attempts to identify and target interventions at this 'high risk' group of service leavers.

There are practical difficulties, however, attendant on any attempt to target interventions to young early leavers. Their departures from the armed forces is usually unplanned and fairly sudden. In any event this research supports the conclusion that 'asking for help' and even taking it up may be considered a sign of weaknesses by some Ex-ASP. The respondents suggest that in the military, resilience in the face of adversity is admired and this attitude may be sustained in the face of discharge and emerging practical or relationship difficulties.

It follows from these observations that the starting point for responding to instances when Ex-ASP experience problems sustaining healthy relationships are developing referral pathways into services that may help. Such pathways should be developed by all the key agencies, and clear to all staff working in statutory and non-statutory, health social and criminal justice contexts.

Above and beyond this however, experience in the civilian field with engaging hard to reach groups may be instructive because it suggests passively making services available may not be sufficient. Across a range of 'social problems' research has demonstrated that help seeking can be low among certain groups (e.g., Keating 2004; Madoc-Jones and Roscoe, 2011; Rogers, 2016,). Relevant here is that Davis (2002) finds a lack the confidence to go and approach someone for fear of being blamed for their situation may prevent members of hard to reach groups approaching others for help.

Over recent years attempts to address a reluctance to seek help amongst some groups have coalesced around more assertive forms of outreach work (e.g in the mental health arena (Priebe et al, 2005) with victims of crime suffering from PTSD (Kelly et al, 2010); with individuals who are long term homeless (Fisk et al., 2009) . In the field of domestic abuse assertive outreach is most often associated with victims and Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA) who are characterised by their independence and who work in partnership with a range of statutory and voluntary agencies. A key aspect of their practice with victims of domestic abuse is they make concerted efforts to contact individuals identified to them as potentially at high risk of domestic abuse. Though more common than was once the case, assertive outreach still represents something of a departure from how services for female victims of domestic abuse have been traditionally organised. Before IDVAs, help would normally only be offered to those victims that approached services and directly asked for it. Numerous reports over the last few years, however, attest to the value placed on the assertive approach to offering service adopted by IDVAs (Madoc-Jones and Roscoe 2011). The potential for a similar assertive service to be offered to Ex-ASPs and their families at the point of transitioning or when relationship difficulties begin should be explored.

Such a development would not be unprecedented as a number of more assertive mentoring type projects are being developed. Care after Combat have introduced a mentoring scheme for ex-service personnel who are within 12 months of release from prisons in England and Wales (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Such assertively offered arrangements can go some way to addressing a reluctance to ask for help.

Dealing with domestic abuse may be considered relatively straightforward if that abuse is identified with 'situational couple violence'. Mentoring may be helpful in itself as well as providing practical assistance to deal with the stresses understood to give rise to that type of domestic abuse. However,

the existence of 'situational couple violence' is disputed (Gray, 2016). Also, in a range of community settings good practice in relation to addressing domestic abuse has been associated with specialist knowledge and skills, separated services for perpetrators and victims of abuse, safety planning and keeping the welfare of any children at the forefront of practice.

In the context of providing services to address the potential for domestic abuse by EX-ASP, there are additional challenges to good practice. Many of our prisoner respondents identified problems with transitioning out of armed service and at times they attributed subsequent social or relationship difficulties they faced, and their offending, to having served. This attribution also featured in some service professionals accounts.

There are reasons to be as weary about accepting all such attributions. Murray (2010) has coined the term 'veteranality', to capture the tendency for the criminality of Ex-ASP to be perceived as being different from others. She comments

We understand them as having different criminogenic needs, vulnerabilities and risk factors just as other populations but in the background is a unique perception that veteran offenders are good or that their crimes are understandable

Murray (2013) suggests veteranality is a process which challenges traditional notions of 'the offender' in criminal justice contexts. Referencing Goffman's theory of offenders as having 'spoiled identities', Murray (2013) refers to the possibility that some Ex-ASP who offend, might seek to retain status in their own eyes or that of their peers or others by embracing a victim identity and the status of the 'normally 'good' warrior who has unjustly suffered. The Royal British Legion caution that veteranality may be problematic if it leaves room for some service personnel to avoid responsibility for their crimes, embrace a victim identity, or perceive themselves as less 'guilty' than other offenders, (Royal British Legion, 2014).

The potential some EX-ASP have to engage in more entrenched gender based violence is likely to be harder to assess and address and to require more specialist training and interventions. Here it apposite to note that albeit our respondents suggested Ex-ASP would prefer to engage in discussion with other EX-ASP, there are dangers associated with such arrangements. In the therapeutic field, the countertransference literature is replete with examples of over-identification with clients, or a failure to recognise or deal with personal issues leaving some workers unsighted on key issues related to risk and vulnerability. The greater ability of some Ex-ASP to empathise with some other Ex-ASP stands in contrast to the greater ability of some non-Ex-ASP to maintain a therapeutic detachment (Iliffe and Steed, 2000). The issue of whether empathy or detachment is most desirable

, however, is not unique to the issue of whether Ex-ASP are better placed to work and engage with other Ex-ASP. It has obtained for years in respect of whether victim/survivors of domestic abuse are best placed to work with and provide services to other victim/ survivors. Also in respect of whether men should be engaged in working with abusive men at all. In civilian contexts, concerns with transference may account for why men are less numerous than women in domestic violence perpetrator work in both probation and the non-statutory sector (Morran 2008)

In terms of bespoke interventions, KCMHR's research on aggressive behaviour and violent offending in serving and ex-Service personnel suggests that some form of highly targeted anger management-related support could be provided to those most at risk of committing violent offences after they leave the Armed Forces (Royal British Legion, 2014). Some of our respondents regretted that such a programme had not been made available to them.

In the USA targeted preventative work has also been directed towards those at risk of domestic abuse. Since 2014 a military-specific domestic abuse prevention program called The Strength at Home-Couples (SAH-C) program has been rolled out in some states to prevent domestic abuse by returning male service members (Taft et al., 2014). The programme emphasises the role faulty threat perception and hostile attribution biases can play in the onset of domestic abuse among those who have been exposed to trauma. The programme is intended for couples that may be experiencing relationship difficulties but are not yet reporting a pattern of physical violence or overt coercive, controlling behaviour by one partner (Taft et al 2014). The existence of such a programme in the USA, comments exploration of whether some arrangements to prevent domestic abuse by higher risk service members in the UK would be appropriate. Moreover whether the potential exists for a programme to be developed that can also tackled more entrenched, gender based, violence.

Recommendations

- The potential for male dominated environments to be supportive of gender stereotypes should be recognised and formal and informal interventions to delegitimise attitudes supportive of domestic abuse in such settings should be encouraged and promoted.
- At the point of transition there should be closer joint working between the military and specialist Ex-ASP service providers, statutory and domestic violence service providers to improve the identification of individuals and families that may be at risk of experiencing domestic abuse.
- Building on existing knowledge about how to engage hard to reach groups, an assertive approach to providing support services to Ex-ASP and their families should be piloted and reviewed.
- Awareness-raising and training on the vulnerability of particular Ex-ASP at the point of transition (young, early leavers) should be undertaken with key professionals working with ASP and Ex-ASP.
- Referral pathways into specialist domestic abuse related services to address needs associated with maintaining healthy relationships should be developed.
- Educational materials and information about sources of support for maintaining healthy relationships should be available to Ex-ASP and their families at the point of discharge.
- Individuals working with Ex-ASP should continue to diversify their practice approaches to increase the range of specific interventions available to prevent and address domestic abuse.

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