



**The ultimate guide
to transitioning into
civilian employment**

Leaving the military and re-entering the civilian world can be a shock to the system, but it happens to every serviceman and woman at some point during their career, whether through retirement, discharge or a desire for change. Things in the civilian world are very different from the military, and it can feel like you've lost a support network. One of the biggest hurdles to cope with is finding employment, and this can come after the stress of sorting out non-military accommodation and helping your family adjust to life outside the forces. It can be a strain but there's no need to face the challenges alone: there are plenty of organisations which can help you to transition into civilian life, from banks to resettlement course providers and even specialist recruiters who actively search for the specific skill set of ex-military personnel.

If you're wondering about what to do after the military, don't be despondent: there is a huge variety of choice out there for people with your experience. See your transition as a fresh challenge to take on – just like you would have done in the forces. Our ultimate guide to transitioning into civilian employment is designed to help you make the shift as smoothly as possible.



Before you leave: resettlement, accommodation and family life

Maximise your resettlement time

Before leaving the military, you will be allocated a Service Resettlement Advisor (SRA), who will arrange a meeting with you to discuss your options for before and after you leave. Most personnel, regardless of rank and length of service, are entitled to resettlement support, which includes financial advice, training and upskilling and career advice for your future.

As well as resettlement time you will also receive terminal leave before the official end of your contract with the forces, which is a good opportunity to look at future employment, take any courses you feel will be beneficial or spend time with your family. This meeting is a great opportunity to talk through your skills and experience, and to discuss any additional training you may be eligible for which will help you in your future career. It's useful having advice from an impartial person to help you find out what might be possible based on your background and experience.

The Career Transition Partnership is another valuable resource, which offers courses and advice at 10 resettlement centres across the UK. You can also benefit from the services of a career consultant and attend workshops on retirement, self-employment and financial planning.

Find accommodation that suits your circumstances

With military life comes the advantage of housing in many roles, taking away the stress of finding private accommodation. Leaving the military means you'll need to find your own housing, whether that's privately renting until you have certainty in your future location and career or buying a house yourself. You may choose to rent somewhere first while

you are transitioning into civilian life, just in case you change your mind on your future career. However, some people like to take advantage of resettlement schemes which can offer Help to Buy to serving or former military personnel. In addition to the Government-backed schemes, there are also specific housing schemes such as Forces Help to Buy – the Joint Service Housing Advice Office can provide you with details on this. Before you choose to buy in a certain area, it's worth doing your research into house prices and types of housing using property websites like Zoopla; it will help you to understand what is available to you in your price range.



The army also offers its own advice on renting or buying accommodation, written by HQ Regional Command, the useful material is laid out in a way that is familiar to service personnel and gives a wealth of information on planning your next move into civilian accommodation. You can find guides on their website, which covers a variety of themes as well as housing.

Depending on your local authority, many military personnel pay CILOCT, a contribution in lieu of council tax, so you will need to register with your new local authority if necessary to ensure you are paying the correct council tax for your accommodation. Registering with your local authority also means you are eligible to vote (if applicable to your circumstances) and can even help with your credit rating.

Whilst serving in the military it's likely that you would have had assistance from your housing provider, such as Carillion Amey, to arrange your moves, sort out any housing issues and make repairs, however, it goes without saying that with your own accommodation this will now become your own responsibility, or if you are privately renting, your landlords'. If you've never had to make simple house repairs before, now is the time to learn: it's also worth noting the contact details of reputable local plumbers, electricians and handymen – just in case!



Support your family through the changes

While wondering what to do after the military may be difficult for you, it will also have an effect on your family who may be reluctant to leave behind friends and the safety net that the military provides. It's important to recognise that the change isn't just about you, but also your partner or spouse and any children you have. If they are of school age, you will need to find new schooling for them – this may require an advanced application if you want your child to go to a particularly popular school. If your children have been lucky enough to benefit from military education allowances or Special Educational Needs Addition, you will need to inform the school that you are no longer in the armed forces so that the correct fees can be paid. You may prefer to enrol your child in a school closer to your new home or have them continue at their current school for more stability, though you may find that the fees increase significantly if it is a fee-paying school.

Any decisions should be discussed thoroughly as a family, so you can weigh up the pros and cons of any decision. Only you know what is right for your family, but it's worth noting that the Army Families Federation has a wealth of experience in helping with family matters, and can provide free and impartial advice should you need it.



Leaving the military: finances, mental health and moving on

Get your finances in order early

During your transition period, it's a good idea to get your finances in order: you may want to enlist the help of a financial planner to get your affairs in order, but there's a lot you can do yourself to set yourself up for success. Begin by making a budget of your income and expenditure, which will help you to control your finances by having an oversight of how much you have coming in and going out. This includes all your household bills, rent or mortgage payments, living costs, any debt, travel and leisure. For some this may mean more payments coming out of your account, as rent and council tax (CILT) is taken directly from your salary before it hits your account. The army provides information and a handy budget guide in its Service Leavers Guides which you can download and print out to fill in yourself.

Assess your mental health needs

The military can be an exceptionally rewarding career path, but during your service you may have been deployed on operations. It's not uncommon for ex-service personnel to report mental health problems after leaving the military, and because of this the forces are taking much more care over mental health during resettlement. Mental health and wellbeing is a huge part of overall health and just as important as physical health. Regrettably, it is often not discussed until service personnel or their families are forced to confront it, but it's important that if you feel low or in need of help that you seek it as soon as possible.

During your time in the military you may have had to cope with bereavement or loss of friends or comrades during conflict, personal injury during service, stress, change of roles or low morale relating to separation from your family for prolonged periods. During your final medical examinations and resettlement, you will be asked about your mental health and given the option to share any worries – there is no stigma around this and you should take advantage of any help where it is given. Your family and your future self will certainly thank you.



Make sure your record is up to date

Before you leave the military, ensure that you have ticked off all the steps needed as part of your service leavers' timeline. This includes having a final medical, dental exam and resettlement officer interview. You will also need to review your Certificate of Service and make sure your record

on JPA is accurate – you will need copies of this information for when you seek employment outside the military. Ensure that you obtain copies of any certificates showing your qualifications – particularly important if you are looking to work in a similar role on discharge, such as a heavy equipment mechanic. You will also need to return all of your service clothing and equipment to stores. Many people like to keep their Armed Forces ID card, otherwise known as a MOD 90, as a memento of their service. If you want to retain your ID card, make sure you contact your Unit HR ahead of time to ‘clip’ the card so it cannot be used after you have discharged from the military.

After the military: writing a CV, new employment, new challenges

Write a stellar CV

To apply for roles outside the military, you will need to write a CV that outlines your experience, qualifications and personal attributes. This is probably something you haven’t needed to write for a long time, as with the military all of your employment details are stored on JPA.

Writing a CV may seem daunting, but it’s actually very straightforward - and you can get advice from The Career Transition Partnership as well as from specialist recruiters. You will need evidence of your skills to show future employers; begin with your experience, your most recent first – this should be the last rank or job you reached in the military. You will also need to add any school, further education or industry qualifications, such as City & Guilds.

If you are considering a mechanic role, you might want to take a look at another of our downloads on writing the perfect mechanic CV.

Seek new employment

With a whole new world of civilian employment at your feet, it can be hard to know where to look. You will have had the opportunity to discuss potential career paths during your resettlement, but it's a whole different experience when actually applying for your first roles post military service.

If you're worried about the transition and have the right experience, you might consider a contract role overseas working within a military environment. These roles are often for prestigious military clients such as the U.S. Army and can take you anywhere from Germany to Kuwait, so it's an ideal transition from military to civilian life; some roles also offer relocation packages or contributions to your travel costs for you or your family.



If you have a background in logistics, warehouse management, heavy vehicle or aviation mechanics, welding or forklift operating, there are many opportunities open to you. This list is not exhaustive – take a look at the sectors that can find exciting roles in overseas contract employment here.

Relish the new challenge

Whether you choose to take a contract role overseas in a familiar military environment as a civilian or head off on an entirely new career path, you should see this transition as a positive in your career path. Your military service will always be regarded well by future employers – so it's up to you to show off your skills, experience and personal attributes to your best advantage.

Take advice where it is offered to help you maximise your knowledge before you leave the forces and remember that support is always available to former military personnel, whether it is from a dedicated advice service or a specialised recruiter who can help you find a role suited to your experience.

To get an idea of the kind of jobs you could apply for, browse our job board.

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