

GROUND-BREAKING RESEARCH SHOWS SCOTTISH VETERANS HAVE TOUGH JOB FINDING WORK

A study commissioned by Poppyscotland, the organisation behind the Scottish Poppy Appeal, has found that finding employment is more difficult for veterans in Scotland than for their counterparts in England. The research, published today (8 April) found that veterans in Scotland are more prone to a number of difficulties which can seriously affect their ability to find employment, leaving them less likely to find work than fellow veterans living outside of Scotland and non-veterans.

Alarming, veterans in Scotland were also found to be 10% more likely to become homeless and 8% more likely to suffer from mental health problems.

Poppyscotland provides assistance to veterans and their dependants across Scotland and the charity commissioned the report by Blake Stevenson in order to gain a better understanding of the employment needs of ex-Servicemen and women. Entitled 'The Employment Needs of Disabled and Vulnerable Veterans in Scotland', the research includes a survey of ex-Service personnel throughout the UK. Whilst the majority of veterans eventually settle into civilian life with little or no difficulty, a staggering 28,000 ex-Servicemen and women across Scotland are known to be out of work and the true number could be far higher.

Overall, the survey found that, compared to their English and Welsh counterparts, veterans living in Scotland are:

- 10% more likely to become homeless
- 8% more likely to suffer from mental health problems
- 5% more likely to have financial problems
- 5% more likely to have a criminal record
- 3% more likely to suffer from alcohol problems

The report identified that for some, more vulnerable veterans, life outside the Forces can be a series of hurdles and challenges such as social isolation, unemployment and even homelessness. Some men and women leave the Forces after having served most or all of their adult life and find it extremely difficult to function in an environment which does not provide the support and structure to which they are accustomed.

As well as feeling like a 'fish out of water' in civilian life, some veterans also struggle with mental or physical illness which can make gaining and sustaining employment extremely difficult. Of those surveyed, 41% said that they sustained an injury or illness during their time in service which has made finding employment more difficult.

Some of the problems listed by the veterans who participated in the study include a lack of support in how to claim benefits and jobseekers advice, a serious shortage of specialist employment advice for those leaving the Forces and even discrimination from some employers who prefer not to employ those with a Service background.

These factors are particularly worrying as more men and women return from serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Poppyscotland is concerned that those who chose to leave the Forces or are discharged

due to injury, could face even tougher conditions back home, exacerbated by the difficulty of finding work.

Chief Executive of Poppyscotland, Jim Panton, said: "This report is the first of its kind never mind in Scotland but I believe anywhere in the United Kingdom and really serves to highlight the difficulties faced by many veterans when they try to find employment back on 'civvy street'. It is alarming to see that the survey respondents in Scotland were statistically more likely to suffer from problems such as alcohol abuse or even homelessness than veterans living in England and Wales.

He explained that more specialist advice and support is crucial to help guide ex-Servicemen and women when they leave the Forces and to make sure that they don't come across pitfalls that may lead to isolation and multiple problems.

He said: "There is a startling lack of specialist support available to people leaving the Forces. It is vital that veterans are given the right advice to help them transfer their skills into suitable roles in the workplace, so that they can feel a part of the community and continue to contribute to society.

"Servicemen and women go through rigorous training and leave with a range of skills and expertise. They therefore have a great deal to offer employers and Scotland's workforce as a whole."

The report also identifies some of the advantages of employing an ex-Serviceman or woman. Typical skills and attributes of veterans that are often cited by employers of veterans include: discipline, a strong work-ethic, the ability to work under pressure, honesty, reliability, dedication and high-level specialist skills.

Poppyscotland runs a number of initiatives aimed at helping men and women find employment after their time in Service. These include operating small business loans, vocational training grants and offering supported employment in the famous Lady Haig's Poppy Factory in Edinburgh. However, the organisation is hopeful that these findings will help make a compelling case for the Scottish Government and the Ministry of Defence to develop further schemes to help veterans find meaningful employment and to ensure that their skills do not go to waste.

Notes to Editors

Scotland / England comparison figures taken from The Employment Needs of Disabled and Vulnerable Veterans in Scotland, by Blake Stevenson, 8 April 2009

Problems which have Affected Veterans Questioned to the Extent that it has Made it Difficult to Get a Job	% of Respondents Living in Scotland	% of Respondents Living in Other Parts of the UK
Family or relationship problems	39%	30%
Problems with drug or alcohol misuse	12%	9%
A criminal record	7%	2%
Homelessness	14%	4%
Lack of relevant training or	26%	33%

skills		
Social isolation	24%	23%
Mental health difficulties	22%	14%
Problems with anger management	24%	21%
Financial Problems	28%	23%

The full report is available online at www.poppyscotland.org.uk

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Blake Stevenson is a company that offers research and consultancy in social and economic development