



Military Lives and Transformative Experiences: A summary for research participants

What we did...

We worked with over 100 veterans in 50 individual interviews and five workshops in Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancaster, London, Manchester and Preston.

In interviews we talked about veterans' experiences joining the services, the places they were deployed, roles undertaken, and people they met. We also talked about experiences leaving service and what veterans did afterwards. We also talked about the role of telling, reading and listening to stories about the military.

In workshops, we worked in small groups to think about joining the services, service-life, and leaving the services. These conversations focused on topics including camaraderie, basic training, enlistment, and post-service life. We used extracts from military autobiographies and interviews to encourage discussion. Your feedback from attending these workshops has helped us to refine our work.

Our interview participants in numbers

| | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|----|
| Service | Army | 23 |
| | Navy | 3 |
| | Air force | 22 |
| | Territorial Army | 2 |
| Length of service | 1-2 years | 16 |
| | 3-10 years | 14 |
| | 11-20 years | 7 |
| | 21-34 years | 12 |
| | Unknown | 1 |
| Type of enlistment | Conscription | 1 |
| | National Service | 20 |
| | Voluntary | 29 |
| Age range | 68 – 70 | 15 |
| | 71-79 | 12 |
| | 80-89 | 19 |
| | 90-100 | 4 |
| Gender | Male | 45 |
| | Female | 5 |



What we learned...

Using military autobiographies helps to facilitate and frame discussion, increasing well-being. Even if the extracts did not reflect your experiences in service, they helped to encourage wider discussion and keep conversation open so that everyone could contribute. We also used extracts from interviews in this workshops, ensuring that veterans' voices were placed at the centre of our work.

Sharing stories is key, and there is little doubt that veterans love to tell stories! However, for many of you, opportunities to tell stories and be heard were reducing due to losing contact with their former regiment / colleagues as they aged, the closing of regimental organisations, and former comrades becoming ill or dying. The bonds between veterans are strong, even if you had not met one another before, served in different roles, or at different times. Our workshops provided a welcome opportunity to meet other veterans and share stories.

You often told us that efforts to work with veterans should instead be focused on younger ex-service personnel and those currently serving. Key concerns discussed in workshops and interviews relate to the issues younger veterans are facing – an awareness of younger veterans in the prison population, bullying, suicide, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). We have shared these concerns during research meetings with the Royal British Legion.

What we have produced...

A toolkit for those working with older veterans to inform their practice. Providing information about veterans' lives, practical recommendations, and a guide for delivering activities aiming to improve well-being. It is designed to be delivered at scale and we hope it will provide benefit to aged veterans nationwide.

Various academic contributions, aiming to inform others about veterans' stories and challenges faced including articles written for academic journals, presentations, and seminars.

A response to the Strategy for our veterans: UK government consultation paper (2019).



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