

MARCH 2018

EVIDENCE BASE EMPLOYING MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES IN THE NHS

Introduction

NHS Employers continually engages with NHS organisations to develop the support available to members of the Armed Forces community within the NHS workforce. As part of this work, we are frequently asked about the tangible benefits employers can expect from employing members of this community.

In response, we collated employer views from across the NHS and combined them with existing research from the private sector, to develop an evidence base that highlights the benefits of employing reservists and the wider Armed Forces community at a local level.

Why should you employ members of the Armed Forces community?

Members of the Armed Forces community can be defined as individuals that may identify as a reservist, veteran, service leaver, spouse or partner, dependant or adult cadet leader.

Forces personnel develop skills, training and experience during their service that are highly transferable to the workplace, such as:

**influencing | teamwork
confidence | self-discipline
decision making | leadership
organisation | communication**

Private sector research

Training

Research conducted by Supporting Britain's Reservists and Employers (SaBRE), and endorsed by the Chartered Management Institute, found that an employer would have to purchase more than £8,000 worth of training to provide the same amount of development that an average reservist's military service provides each year.¹ According to SaBRE employer research in 2014, 83 per cent of reservist employers agreed that reservists gain transferable skills that could never be learned in their civilian jobs, and 80 per cent believe reserve service benefits the general development of employees.²

Value to employers

Deloitte conducted research in 2016 to recognise the potential of ex-service personnel. It found that organisations that have employed members of the Armed Forces are very positive about the value they bring, as 72 per cent of organisations would definitely recommend employing veterans and 80 per cent say they understand how military skills fit in with their organisation's needs.³

Skills

Around 90 per cent of organisations recognise veterans as performing well in 20 out of the 25 skill areas examined in the Deloitte research, particularly areas relating to communication, planning, time management, team working, leading others and problem solving.² Additionally, more than half of organisations said that veterans tend to be promoted more quickly than their workforce in general and tend to have lower rates of sickness absence, with 79 per cent of organisations agreeing that they take fewer days off sick.³

Our research

In response to this research from the private sector, we engaged with our network of NHS organisations who employ Armed Forces personnel, to collect quantitative and qualitative data based on their experiences.

A survey was created to collect a broad range of data covering topics such as:

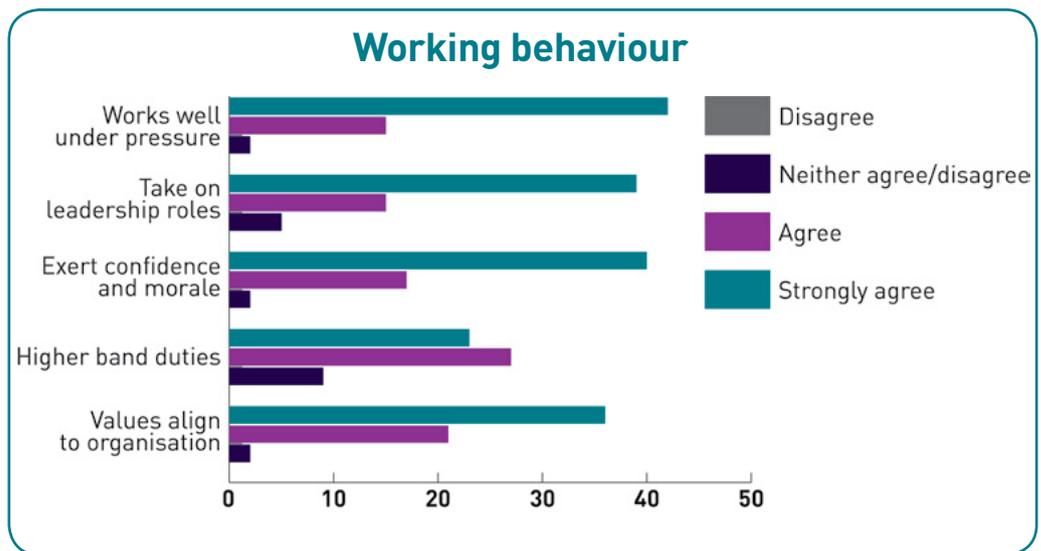
- working patterns
- additional skills brought to the organisation
- retention
- demonstrable benefits
- sickness average
- employer recommendations.

The response rate from our Armed Forces Network was equal to a quarter of all NHS trusts in England, including 59 organisations representing all secondary healthcare service providers (acute, mental health, community and ambulance services).

Key findings

Working behaviours

97 per cent of all respondents reflected positively on the working behaviour of their Armed Forces employees in the categories of working under pressure, taking on leadership roles, demonstrating effective confidence and good morale, and strong alignment with their organisation's values. A further 85 per cent of respondents reported positively that Armed Forces employees have a capacity to take on higher band duties.



Additional skills

83 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that Armed Forces employees have had a positive influence on their organisation because of the additional skills brought by their military career. 37 per cent of respondents added qualitative data through written accounts of how their Armed Forces workforce has positively influenced their organisation through their additional skills.

When a reservist's civilian and military employment are similar, for example medical reservists in the NHS, reserve service offers opportunities for developing specialist skills that can be directly transferred to the employer. However, in all cases it is well recognised that reservists develop significant management and leadership capabilities in a highly demanding environment, making individuals well placed to deal with workplace challenges.⁴

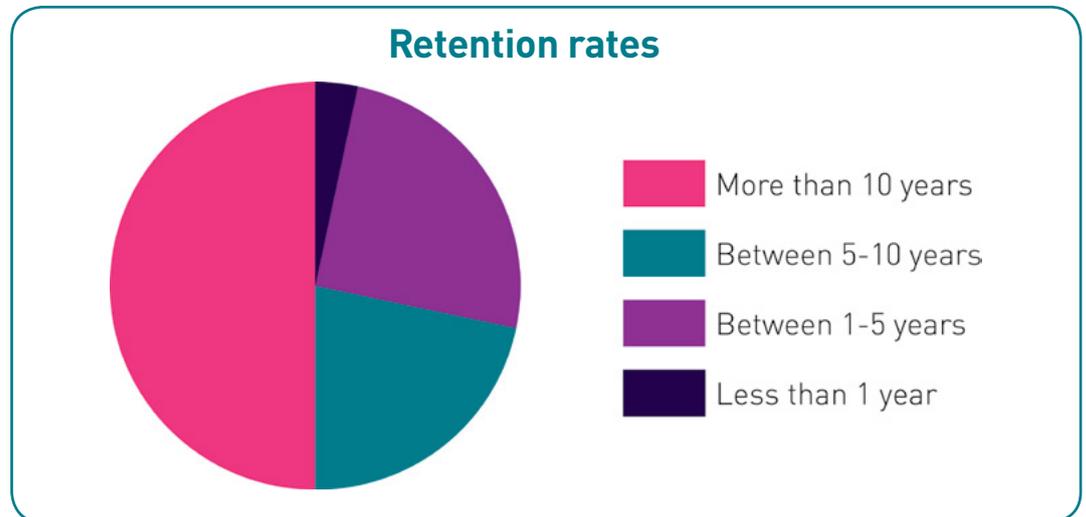
“The development of transformation strategies and operational management of staff, resources and logistics have all been significantly improved by the skills brought into the organisation by veterans and reservists” – **Barts Health NHS Trust**

“Our military network has influenced creating a standard leave policy for reservists across the organisations in the north of the county”
– **Cumbria Partnership NHS Trust**

“Our trust witnesses the leadership and team building skills of military employees whilst bringing a ‘can do’ attitude to the workplace”
– **City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust**

Measuring retention of Armed Forces employees

Respondents were asked to identify the length of time their Armed Forces employees have been with their organisations:



On average, it is expected that employees move jobs every five years,⁵ this therefore displays high levels of retention from Armed Forces employees in their organisation. Furthermore, more than half of respondents agreed that they had witnessed an increase in recruitment of Armed Forces colleagues after becoming a publicly supportive employer.

Sickness absence

44 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that Armed Forces employees had lower rates of sickness absence in comparison to civilian employees. The remaining respondents felt that the rates of sickness absence were no different.

Two respondents were able to provide sickness absence averages for their reservists versus their organisation’s average, which displayed a significant difference. The average reservist sickness absence equalled 0.093 compared to the whole workforce average of 4.65.

Employer satisfaction

When asked if they would recommend employing members of the Armed Forces community, 100 per cent of organisations agreed that they would, while 58 per cent of respondents also provided positive comments based on their thoughts of Armed Forces employees.

“These employees come to us with unique training and skills, which as a public sector organisation we would not be able to afford to provide our staff with the training. Loyalty, commitment and leadership skills are what they most have in common and fit with our trust values.”

- **Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**

“All Armed Forces staff that we have employed are committed, loyal, valuable members of staff. They are extremely proud of their military work and fully supportive to us in any recruitment engagement that we take part in.” -

South Central Ambulance Service NHS Trust

“Within our trust we have a number of service personnel that come with an attitude that gets the job done and to a high standard. Two members of staff work in fields such as information governance and risk management, two areas in the NHS where there seems to be a logical career path following service.” - **Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust**

When asked if their organisation has witnessed benefits from employing members of the Armed Forces community, 86 per cent of respondents identified positively with the statement.

Conclusion

The NHS findings showed that 100 per cent of respondents would recommend employing members of the Armed Forces community. This demonstrates the extensive benefits of the Armed Forces workforce, such as long retention rates, positive working behaviour and the effect of additional skills from military service. Our evidence underpins the themes identified in private sector research in this area.

Overall, the data shows that employing Armed Forces members in NHS organisations should be encouraged. It is recommended that not only should employers actively recruit members of the Armed Forces, but must also be able to provide a supportive environment for current serving personnel and also for individuals transitioning into a civilian career.

Employers can now find out how best to recruit and support members of the Armed Forces community in their organisation by using the resources, information and guidance on [NHS Employer's Armed Forces web section](#).

References

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NHS Employers

The NHS Employers organisation is the voice of employers in the NHS, supporting them to put patients first. Our vision is to be the authoritative voice of workforce leaders, experts in HR, negotiating fairly to get the best deal for patients.

We help employers make sense of current and emerging healthcare issues to ensure that their voice is front and centre of health policy and practice. We keep them up to date with the latest workforce thinking and expert opinion, providing practical advice and information, and generating opportunities to network and share knowledge and best practice.

We work with employers in the NHS to reflect their views and act on their behalf in four priority areas:

- pay and negotiations
- recruitment and planning the workforce
- healthy and productive workplaces
- employment policy and practice.

The NHS Employers organisation is part of the NHS Confederation.

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