

# WHERE & HOW ARE MILITARY PARTNERS WORKING?

Survey conducted into the working lives and career aspirations of military partners in 2020

This survey was conducted in April/May 2020, when the Coronavirus pandemic had hit and the UK was in lockdown.

#### **CONTENTS**

### **KEY FINDINGS** from 2200 responses



35%

have a role that they can take with them when they move

13%

are hoping that Covid will change their employers view on remote working

44% 47%

either are, or would like to. work remotely

have been in their current role less than 18 months



had to leave their last job because they moved and couldn't take the job with them



working hours

62%

would like to work part time (10-30 hours a week)

55%

of respondents would like to work during school hours

£2.6%

wanted to work evenings or weekends

#### 26% WOULD LIKE TO RUN THEIR OWN BUSINESS



60% 54%

of respondents are educated to Degree level or above

would like to gain further qualifications

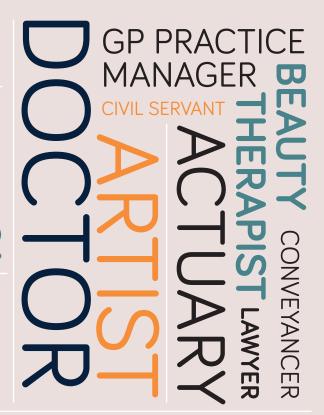
A quarter of respondents are working in their chosen career, at the appropriate level for their qualifications

#### WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER

# PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER

GRAPHIC DESIGNER DENTAL NURSE



## PHYSIOTHERAPIST

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

**DOG TRAINER** 

PROBATION OFFICER

**UNDFRTAKER** 

MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT

HAIRDRESSER MIDWIFE FLORIST



# CAN YOU DESCRIBE HOW YOUR CAREER HAS BEEN IMPACTED BY THE MILITARY LIFESTYLE?

"Not at all"

"Military takes priority so job has to come second"

"I don't see myself with a career. I work to fit around family and my partners job."

"It pushed me to set up my own business-I don't believe I would have made this decision if I had not married into the army."

"I have never been able to progress in any career and constantly had to start again in new fields each time I move due to lack of opportunity. Moving every 12 to 18 months makes my CV look like I'm no good at anything and constantly get moved on."

"Cannot stay long enough in same firm to progress"

"People think you're unreliable as you will move on. Haven't been able to fully establish myself within a company. It's also effected my self esteem and confidence"

"I've had to take a step back to be the main carer for our children as we never know when my husband finishes work on a daily basis or when he will be away"

# WHAT WOULD BE THE ONE THING THAT WOULD HELP YOU TO MAINTAIN YOUR CAREER?

"Help with childcare"

"A bit more stability around deployments and partners working hours"

"Having family nearby"

"Being able to take my job with me on moves"

"Flexible working"

"Not having to relocate every two years, but this would then impact on my husband's career"

"Presently I'm happy as it is"

"Remote working"

"Employers locally being more open minded and looking for skills rather than previous job titles"

> "Flexibility/remote working offered by employers"

are either underemployed or have found their career progression slowed by military life

have changed careers to allow for the military lifestyle

## What appeals to you about the Military Coworking Network?

Being part of a like minded community and having a way of making friends



45%

Having a network I can use to get help and ask questions



40%

Having people to talk to during the day so I am not alone at home all the time



40%

Being able to separate my work and my home life



40%

Having somewhere to go to work where I can focus and concentrate away from the distractions of domestic life at home



30%

The opportunity of creating a routine and being able to go 'out' to work in an office again



9%

My employer would be more open to the idea of me working remotely if they knew I was working from a hub



84%

Think it's "very important" or "important" for their mental health to get out of the house

'A significant number of respondents articulated that in order to maintain a career they chose to live married unaccompanied and sacrifice their relationship/marriage with their serving partner. '

# QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF MILITARY LIFESTYLE ON SPOUSAL EMPLOYMENT AND SENSE OF SELF.

Prepared on behalf of the Military Coworking Hubs by Dr. Elizabeth Newman-Earl (Visiting Fellow - School of Health and Social Care University of Essex, Armed Conflict & Crisis Hub Member University of Essex)

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

The purpose of this short report is to demonstrate key impacts that this lifestyle has on the working habits and patterns of both accompanying and un-accompanying partners.

This work is based entirely on respondents' answers and assesses six key areas on which the future delivery and success of the Military Coworking Hubs will be monitored at the conclusion of the two-year pilot phase of the project.

#### LOSS OF IDENTITY:

Being unable to find commensurate employment and finding lower paid work has multiple negative impacts. Partners cited how on leaving employment due to mobility their sense of identity has been eroded, finding it difficult to reinvent themselves professionally. "I have had to reinvent myself to a new career every time we have moved depending on what's available if anything. I feel like a Jack of all trades - Master of none. I have found this to be intimidating to prospective employers. I'm tired of not having a career pathway of my own and some identity of who I am."

#### **AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE:**

Partners referenced sacrificing careers on behalf of service personnel despite being in several cases the main earner of the family. Additionally, respondents cited parental responsibility directly impacting on career progression and identity. Partners give up their professional identity to make family life work around service personnel commitments. "We have moved 8 times in 10 years. I haven't been able to take my job with me so have coasted in lower level jobs. I've worked in multiple industries because I take what I can get. My career or lack thereof has had a massive impact on my mental health and self-worth".

#### **CONFIDENCE:**

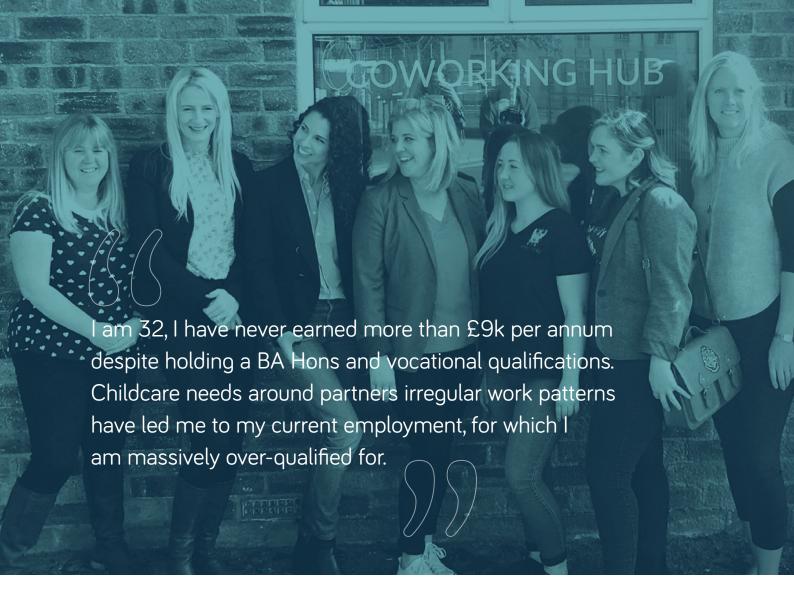
In referencing the direct impact on their confidence, respondents stated how their mobility, the long gaps on their CV and potential employer's responses negatively impacted on them. For employed partner, in not being recognised for promotion confidence was detrimentally affected leading to questioning their value as employees and members of the workforce. "I don't feel I have the career I would have had if we hadn't moved so much. I am in a job much lower than I believe I am capable of. Knocked confidence due to being out of practice or having to accept roles that I don't believe match my abilities."

#### **CAREER IMPACT:**

Significant numbers cited the inability to find regular employment, maintain employment due to postings or lack of shared parenting with the service personnel. Additionally, respondents stated that they have taken lower qualified roles (including obstetricians, dentists, veterinary nurses, teachers and private sector employees and civil servants). "I do not say this lightly, as ex-military being married to a service person has ruined my career. I have resigned from permanent roles. I have large gaps in my CV. I am considered a flight risk as I move so much. I have no professional network, through moving to so many different areas."

#### **EMPLOYER UNDERSTANDING:**

Minimal respondents referenced having supportive or sympathetic employers. It was mentioned by multiple respondents how employers were reluctant to consider partners for promotion or to put forward for CPD was 'denied' them. Respondents also referenced an inability to undertake professional training as employers



were reluctant to invest into partners if they were going to move within a short time frame. One respondent stated that "For some nursing courses, I had to guarantee payback time of at least 2 years otherwise I would be liable for cost of courses - some of which can be thousands of pounds."

### LOCAL SUPPORT NETWORK FOR CHILDCARE:

Repeatedly it was mentioned the lack of childcare provision across the breadth of postings. Partners invariably choose to side-line their career in order to be the "consistent" parent. The evidenced trend through the responses is that the poor provision of childcare, inability to rely on serving personnel's family involvement has derailed most partners' careers. One respondent stated that "I am 32, I have never earned more than £9k per annum despite holding a BA Hons and vocational qualifications. Childcare needs around partners irregular work patterns have led me to my current employment, for which I am massively overqualified for."

#### **ADDITIONAL IMPACTS:**

A significant number of respondents articulated that in order to maintain a career they chose to live married unaccompanied and sacrifice their relationship/marriage with their serving partner. Whilst nominally a 'choice' that each couple makes, the impact of having to choose between living with their partner or maintaining their career and associated personal identity markers can be detrimental and costly to both the partner and the marriage itself.

Also, where women are posted around the time of their maternity leave a number referenced how they had were only entitled to statutory maternity leave rather than their entitlement as an employee.

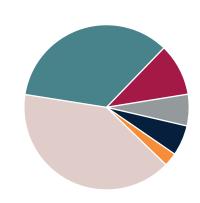


# SURVEY RESPONSES & RAW DATA

1 What is your current employment status?

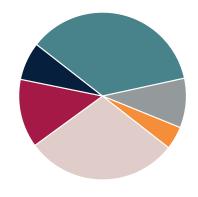
responses	$\downarrow$	$\downarrow$
In full-time employment	886	40%
In part-time employment	764	35%
Self-employed	225	10%
Not employed – seeking work	136	6%
Not employed – not seeking work	131	6%
Other	58	3%

Number out of 2200 Percentage



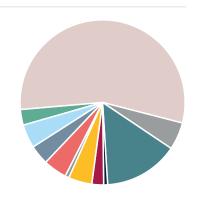
1a You are currently unemployed, but looking for work.
Which of these best describes your current job situation?

We have just moved to a new area	40	29%
I am struggling to find something in my line of work where we are currently posted	18	13%
There are no jobs in this area, even outside my normal line of work	10	7%
I can't find a job that fits with my lifestyle ie part time/remote working	49	36%
I keep getting turned down for jobs	13	10%
Other	6	4%



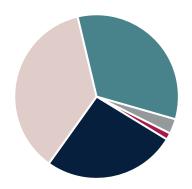
1b You are not currently employed, and are not looking for work.
Which of these reasons best explains why you are not currently looking for work?

I am currently a stay at home mum, and I don't want to go back to work.	4	3%
I am currently a stay at home mum, and I plan to go back to work when I feel the kids are old enough.	72	55%
I am currently studying	7	5%
We are currently overseas and job opportunites are limited.	19	15%
My immigration status means I am unable to work	1	1%
I cannot currently work due to medical conditions	3	2%
There are no jobs in my line of work where we are currently posted.	6	5%
We are too far away from a town, and I don't drive.	1	1%
I don't feel it is worth it as we move around so often.	6	5%
Can't get a job with the right hours	5	4%
Other (eg Inbetween jobs because of postings (4), children with special needs(1))	6	5%



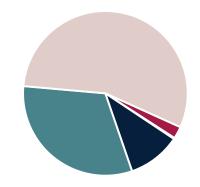
2 Ideally, how many hours a week would you like to work?

In an ideal world I wouldn't work	65	3%
Less than 10 hours	29	1%
10-20 hours	575	26%
20-30 hours	801	36%
Full Time	729	33%



What working hours would best suit your lifestyle?

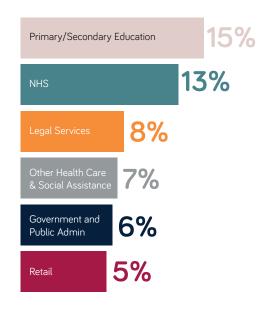
Regular office hours	696	32%
School hours	1216	55%
Evenings	52	2%
Weekends	5	0.2%
Don't Mind	228	10%



4 Which of the following best describes the sector you work in?

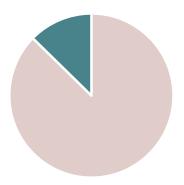
Other	213	10%
Religious	2	0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	4	0%
Wholesale	5	0%
Construction	6	0%
Publishing	8	0%
Information Services and Data Processing	10	0%
Vetinary	11	1%
Recruitment	11	1%
Software	12	1%
Transportation and Warehousing	13	1%
Telecommunications	14	1%
Hair/Beauty	23	1%
Manufacturing	27	1%
Property	28	1%
Scientific or Technical Services	29	1%
Charity	31	1%

41	
41	2%
46	2%
49	2%
59	3%
62	3%
66	3%
79	4%
88	4%
89	4%
110	5%
123	6%
142	7%
181	8%
275	13%
315	15%
	49 59 62 66 79 88 89 110 123 142 181 275



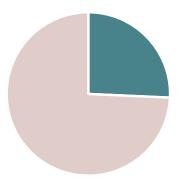
Do you run your own business?

Yes	1916	13%
No	278	87%



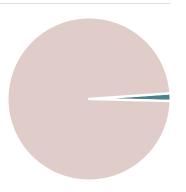
Would you like to run your own business?

Yes	493	26%
No	1424	74%



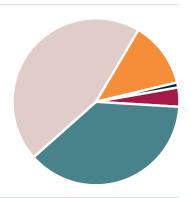
8 Are you...

Male	33	2%
Female	2161	98%



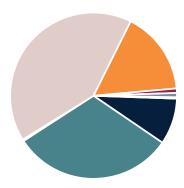
9 How old are you?

18-24	82	4%
25-34	825	38%
35-44	991	45%
45-54	281	13%
55-64	21	1%
65+	0	0%



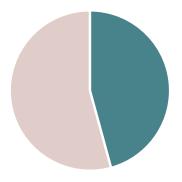
What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Secondary Education (GCSE/O-Levels)	197	9%
Post-Secondary Education (College, ALevels, NVQ3 or below or similar)	685	31%
Foundation Degree / Diploma	7	0%
Undergraduate Degree (BA, BSc, etc.)	902	41%
Post-graduate Degree (MA, MSc, PhD, etc.)	356	16%
Professional Qualification (including PGCE)	19	1%
Advanced Diploma/NVQ 4 or above	18	1%
Below GCSE	3	0%
None	3	0%



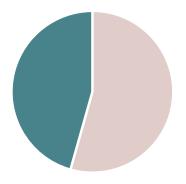
Do you have vocational/ professional qualifications?

Yes	733	46%
No	869	54%



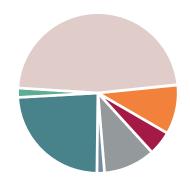
Do you want to gain further qualifications?

Yes	1192	54%
No	1000	46%



What qualifications would you like to get?

A-Levels	2	0%
Undergraduate degree	216	10%
Post-graduate degree	106	5%
Professional Qualification	227	10%
GCSE or equivilent	33	2%
Other	520	24%
Anything to make me more employable	41	2%
N/A or don't know	1029	47%



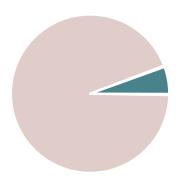
Which of these social media platforms do you use regularly?

Facebook	2111	96%
Instagram	1291	59%
LinkedIn	472	21%
Twitter	432	20%
Other (eg Snapchat, Tik Tok)	13	1%



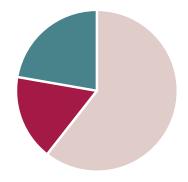
## What is your marital status?

Married	2066	94%
Civil Partnership	6	0.3%
Long term relationship	122	5.5%
Divorced	5	0.2%



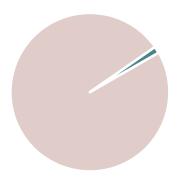
Which service is your partner with?

Army	1331	61%
Navy	377	17%
RAF	489	22%



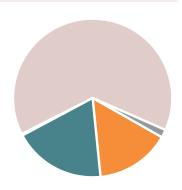
17 Is your partner...

Regular	2162	99%
Reservist	30	1%



Where are you living?

Accompanied in SFA/SSFA	1407	64%
Unaccompanied in SFA/SSFA	36	2%
Accompanied in private rental or	333	15%
Unaccompanied in private rental or	412	19%
Other	7	0%



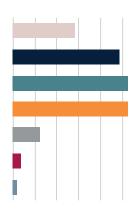
Where are you currently posted?

England	1818	83%
Wales	55	3%
Scotlad	200	9%
Northern Ireland	13	1%
Overseas	111	5%



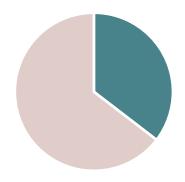
How many times have you moved in the last 5 years?

None	315	14%
Once	532	24%
Twice	581	26%
Three times	578	26%
Four times	135	6%
Five times	43	2%
More than five times	16	1%



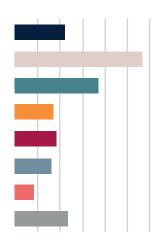
22 Does your job offer mobility meaning that you can take it with you when you are posted?

Yes	773	35%
No	1410	65%



23 How long have you been in your current position?

Not currently employed	244	11%
Less than 12 months	624	28%
12 - 18 months	409	19%
18 - 24 months	183	8%
24 - 36 months	201	9%
3 - 4 years	177	8%
4 - 5 years	98	4%
5 years+	260	12%



24 Why did you leave your last position?

We moved and I couldn't take the role with me	1222	57%
I chose to move jobs for a better/different role.	395	18%
I chose to stay at home with my children	137	6%
I was made redundant	64	3%
Childcare reasons	153	7%
Personal reasons	76	4%
Other	37	2%
Contract work	14	1%
Went back to studying	10	0.5%
N/A (Have been in same role for years/first job)	49	2%



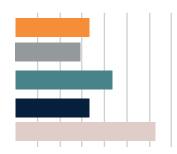
25 If you are working, are you currently working in your chosen career and at the appropriate level for your qualifications?

Yes	525	26%
Yes, but my career progession has been slowed due to military life	436	22%
Yes, but I have changed careers to allow for our military lifestyle.	272	14%
No, I have taken a lower paid/qualified role that fits with our military lifestyle.	751	38%



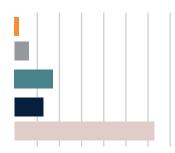
In the last 12
months, how often
have you encouraged
your partner to stay
in the RAF/Navy/
Army?

All the time	365	17%
A lot	323	15%
Sometimes	468	21%
Occastionally	350	16%
Never	689	31%



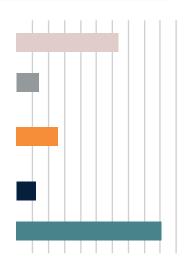
29 In the last 12 months, how often have you encouraged your partner to leave the RAF/Navy/Army?

All the time	50	2%
A lot	122	6%
Sometimes	378	17%
Occastionally	280	13%
Never	1364	62%



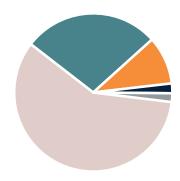
30 Are you able to work remotely/from home?

No - It is not possible in my line of work (ie retail, medical, etc)	960	45%
No - my company has never allowed it, or is not set up for it	111	5%
I wasn't, but I am hoping that Covid-19 will change my way of working going forward as I am working from home now.	266	13%
Yes - but I chose not to as I enjoy the office environment	118	6%
Yes - I already do, either full time or part time	669	31%



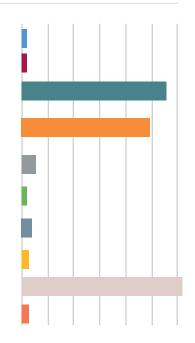
How important is getting out of the house to work for your mental health?

Very important	1285	59%
Important	611	28%
Not very important	216	10%
Not at all important	44	2%
Not sure	39	2%



34 If there was a hub on your base would you use it?

Other	31	1%
I need privacy for my work	28	1%
No, I can't work remotely	635	29%
I am not living close enough to a camp at the moment	444	21%
No, I like working at home on my own	158	7%
I am not working at the moment	20	1%
Maybe/Not sure/would need to know more	75	3%
Probably/would like to in the future	39	2%
Yes I would, ether full or part time	691	32%
Yes, I am/was already using one.	41	2%



What element of the Military Coworking Network most appeals to you?

Being part of a community of	1087	64%
Having a network I can use to get	774	45%
Having somewhere to go to work	683	40%
The opportunity of creating a	516	30%
Having people to talk to during the	687	40%
Being able to separate my work	683	40%
Having somewhere on the base I	367	22%
My employer would be more open	155	9%



## quotes from question 27

# CAN YOU DESCRIBE HOW HAS YOUR CAREER IMPACTED BY THE MILITARY LIFESTYLE?

"I have not been able to progress as I should have and have had to work ridiculously hard to develop specialist skills without the consistent support of employer. I have not been able to meet my career goals but instead have a wealth of knowledge from all the different places and organisations I have worked for. There are significant negatives but I have learnt so many other valuable skills and am a better clinician from all the challenges I have faced moving around the world to support Husbands service."

"Devastated it. Now underearning, underachieving and doing a job I'm not fulfilled by or passionate about, whereas before I had worked hard through uni and beyond to put myself into my dream long-term career. Frustrating. With hubby being posted every 2 years we had to choose to keep relocating and the kids take the hit re education or settle but them miss their Dad when he weekly commutes"



The Military Coworking Network is a community run by, and for, military partners.

Funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Trust and supported by our Steering Board partners, the Naval Families Federation, Army Families Federation, RAF Families Federation and the Royal Air Forces Association we are working to establish a network of coworking spaces on military bases around the UK and overseas, supported by an online community.

We provide non-serving members of the military community with spaces to work and study in, and a place to connect with each other in a professional environment to reduce social isolation.

For further information please contact us on info@militarycoworking.uk





@militarycowork

in Military Coworking Network

www.militarycoworking.uk



