

UNITED AND VALUED:

Perspectives on Military Charities Today



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Preface

The military charity sector plays a vital role in supporting those who have served their country in the armed forces. As the number of beneficiaries and their public profile diminish, but the complexity of individual cases increases, perhaps with shifting levels of state provision, the need for focus, cooperation and dialogue within and without the sector will become ever more critical.

This publication, full of strongly felt argument from a wide variety of perspectives, makes an important contribution to the debate on how this can best be achieved.

Lieutenant General Sir William Rollo KCB, CBE

Lieutenant General Sir William Rollo was originally commissioned into the Blues and Royals. A long career, including multiple operational tours in the Balkans and Iraq, finished in 2013 after appointments successively as Adjutant General and Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Personnel & Training). He now combines being a director of The Military Mutual with a number of trustee and voluntary roles, including serving on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Introduction

In the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, veterans, who had often suffered unbearably whilst deployed, were largely ignored and there are numerous accounts of them dying as vagrants, unseen by society. With the rise of Victorian philanthropy in the middle of the 19th Century, the role of charities for veterans became critical, especially after the Crimean War, when the government was shown to be lacking in its support for our forces, especially post-deployment. This trend of reliance on charity was continued through the First World War, as a result of which nearly 18,000 charities were founded, with more continuing to be established with every conflict since.

In recent years, the sector has settled at around 2,000 charities representing a total income in the region of £400 million per annum with reserves of over £1bn. The income from these assets is crucial to maintaining and improving veterans' care and support; James Codrington examines how charity reserves can best be invested on page 30.

The totals may be impressive, but this sector is heavily skewed to a small number of large charities, whilst it also includes one-person ventures. Despite an increased profile of veterans' needs owing to the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, there has been no statistical increase in the number of voluntary organisations during the last decade. Large charities, such as Blesma, have adapted to modern needs, as Barry Le Grys discusses on page 22, whilst smaller organisations plug gaps as Dorinda Wolfe Murray explains on page 14.

Despite over a century of providing services and support not otherwise available to veterans and service personnel, in recent times explosive headlines have hit the sector. From the fundraising scandals of 2015 and 2016, to specific military charities falling foul of their charitable principles, trust has been eroded across the third sector. Reputation and fundraising go hand in hand, and good communication is key, as Tim Brawn points out on page 28.

In this publication, we seek to address the issues facing the sector as well as discussing the ways in which military charities make a real difference to people's lives, whether it be in terms of health (physical and mental), education and research, housing, welfare delivery or in a plethora of other areas. Some have suffered for their country and found the aftercare wanting, and perhaps a Ministry for Veterans should be created, as Robert Lawrence suggests on page 18. Such a Ministry would not work, contends Andrew Murrison on page 11, as too many other departments are involved, such as the NHS and local authorities.

However, there is a need for greater coordination between military charities according to Tom Tugendhat on page 26. Ensuring that there is not overlap is one area that the government could step in, not to take over, but to support change.

The organisation tasked with supporting the sector is Cobseo. On page 7, we learn that the sector continues to work to avoid duplication, reduce overheads and to act in a coordinated way. The employability of ex-service personnel is explored by Edward Wild on page 38: working together helps both businesses and veterans in civilian life.

In this publication, we have not sought to teach a successful area within the charity sector how to reinvent itself, but to provide information and insights from those who are making a difference to our veterans' lives. From the politics of the Military Covenant, to the outlook for the military charity sector, we hope this extends the debate beyond the close-knit military community to the wider charitable sector.

March 2017

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Changing Times – the Armed Forces Charities Sector

General Sir John McColl KCB CBE DSO is the Chairman of Cobseo (The Confederation of Service Charities), following an illustrious career in the British Army. From 2007-11, he was Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe, before being appointed Lieutenant Governor of Jersey.

In his article, Sir John considers the development of the military charities sector, as well as the challenges it faces.

The Armed Forces Charities Sector in its current form is over a century old and reflects the rich history of the United Kingdom in war and peacetime over that period. The makeup of the sector has its roots in the conflicts of every era and the varied and changing needs of Service Personnel and their dependents that have arisen as a consequence.

The result is a complex mosaic of charities, which does not lend itself to easy interpretation or analysis by the outside world. However, a clear understanding of the sector, and more importantly the changing requirements of the Armed Forces Community, is essential if development is to keep pace with the needs of those we seek to serve. The discussion prompted by Wild Search and Rathbones' publication of 'United and Valued' is a welcome initiative in providing a forum for dialogue and a catalyst for developing thinking.

The nature of conflicts over the last decade and a half have intensified the focus and demands upon the Armed Forces Charities Sector and the charities, empowered by the generosity of the nation, have stepped forward magnificently. Illustrated by organisations signing up to the Armed Forces Covenant: "the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families."

However, change and fundamental change is with us; the size and shape of the Armed Forces have undergone, and continue to undergo, radical alteration with further adjustments planned. The effect is not only on the number of serving and retiring personnel, but on the national footprint; support to families, the regular-reserve mix and the size of the veterans' community. All this comes against the backdrop of a reduced military profile in terms of international deployments, a squeeze on government funding, devolution and delegation across government, and an increase in regulation across all areas of the charitable sector. As we chart our way through this complex terrain any discussion of the Armed Forces Charities Sector needs to be based on thorough research and there is an increasing body of excellent work to call upon.

The Royal British Legion 2014 Household Survey sets out the backdrop: "There is a pervading myth that serving and ex-Service Personnel are 'mad, bad and sad' i.e. that most suffer mental health problems, that many veterans end up in prison or sleeping rough on the streets, and that many are suicidal. 'Zombie' statistics, such as the claim that more Falklands veterans have committed suicide than died in action in 1982 or that veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan face a 'Tsunami' of mental health problems have been comprehensively debunked, and yet persist in media headlines. These myths are pernicious because they may harm the employment prospects of military personnel when they seek work in the civilian world, and they may divert resources away from addressing genuine problems."

The passing of our WW2 servicemen and women and their immediate families will undoubtedly reduce the overall size of the Armed Forces Community in the medium term. However the complexity of demands are likely to increase; mental health is a particular area of concern.¹ The pressures on government indicate that the charitable sector will be asked to do proportionally more for a reducing constituency. To quote the ABF:

'We should assume fiscal constraint and further Government imposed savings measures which will result in significant contraction of public service provision to beneficiaries. The Charity (ABF The Soldiers' Charity) with other 'Third Sector providers is likely to be asked to 'fill the void' with provision of increased levels of benevolence support.' ABF The Soldiers' Charity 2014.

¹ FiMT Mental Health of Servinf and ex - Serving Personnel

The net effect is that in the near term the demands placed upon the Service sector are likely to stretch and perhaps exceed available resources, and require sensitive adjustment in delivery.

The sector's relationship with central and local government is managed through a number of forums of which the Services Charities Partnership Board and the Covenant Reference Group, both of which include Ministerial involvement, are two. Appropriate individual charities are represented with Cobseo providing a voice for the broader sector. Holding Government to account for the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant is an important aspect of this work. The transfer of responsibility to devolved administrations and to the regions provides a significant challenge to the coherence of communication. Going forward provision for the Armed Forces Community will be a balance between government and the charitable sector, constructive robust dialogue is essential if we are to get that balance right.

A common criticism is that there are simply too many charities. In 2014 the Directory for Social Change, funded by the Forces in Mind Trust, completed an important report UK Armed Forces Charities: An Overview and Analysis. "The research found that between 2009-2014 the number of charities within our sector decreased by 7%. Armed Forces Charities make up just 1.1% of the register of charities in England and Wales and they cater for the needs of a potential beneficiary population comprising according to recent estimates of 6.2 million people.² It would seem that the sector is not over represented but there is continuous work to be done to avoid duplication and reduce overheads. There is also no doubt that those wishing to access Service charities both donors and those seeking support find it confusing. Collectively we need to rationalise where possible and communicate better.

² *Ibid*

The change in the visibility of the Armed Forces means a change in the profile of the charities and organisations supporting it. If we don't have troops on the ground in Afghanistan and Iraq, why do they still need help? After years of growth the combined income of the armed forces welfare charity sector fell by 6% in 2012. More recent data indicates that this trend has continued and it would be prudent to assume continued downward pressure on resources in the medium term. This financial headwind adds impetus for the drive to ensure that charities are as lean and efficient as possible. As competition increases there is also a need to ensure that fundraising practices are consistent with the regulatory framework. In order to sustain our support base there is a critical need to ensure that we retain the trust of the nation. Whilst Cobseo is not a regulatory body it has a role to play.

Membership of the Confederation is dependent upon criteria which embrace good governance, including compliance with financial regulation, data protection, and fundraising standards. There is also a requirement for an overarching commitment to core values based upon service to our beneficiaries. The Cobseo Cluster groups allow charities of similar interests e.g. Housing, Criminal Justice etc³ to share best practice and reduce duplication. The Confederation also works closely with the Charity Commission and any new military charity setting up will be discussed very carefully. Sometimes a restricted fund within a larger charity will be more beneficial because it streamlines administrative overheads.

In summary the environment within which the Armed Forces Charities Sector operates is evolving at speed stimulating lively, at times passionate debate. In mapping out a way ahead amidst strongly held competing, and at times conflicting, views it is important that developing thought is based upon the well found body of objective research that is available. The beneficiary community will change probably reducing in overall numbers but increasing in the complexity of individual cases. The pressures upon resources are likely to increase as the Sector reacts to receding government provision. The Armed Forces Charities will need to act with coordinated authority if the balance of responsibility between the State and the sector to be set at a pragmatic level. Above all the Sector will only be able to continue its invaluable work in support of servicemen and women and their dependents if it retains the trust, and generous support, of the Nation.

³ Cluster Groups, Employment, Foreign and Commonwealth, Housing, Integrated Communications Support Network (ICSN), Membership, Research, Residential Care Homes, Serving Personnel, Veterans in the Criminal Justice System, Welfare, Health and Wellbeing Arena made up of: The Medical Advisory Committee, Contact; Mental Health, Casework Steering Group and a Families cluster – in development.

In Conversation with Andrew Murrison MP

Andrew represented the constituency of Westbury from 2001 to 2010 and has held the seat of South West Wiltshire since its creation in 2010. He served for eighteen years as a Medical Officer in the Royal Navy, leaving in October 2000 with the rank of Surgeon Commander. He was recalled in 2003 at the outbreak of the Iraq War. He has held a number of positions both on the front and shadow front benches, including Shadow Health Minister and Shadow Defence Minister. In opposition, Andrew was asked by David Cameron to establish the Military Covenant Commission.

After being appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Health Secretary in the 2010 Coalition Government, he published two reports focusing on the Armed Forces Community: 'Fighting Fit' and 'A Better Deal for Military Amputees'. He also published his book 'The Military Covenant' in 2011 and was appointed the Prime Minister's Special Representative for the First World War Centenary Commemorations the same year. He held the position of Minister for International Security Strategy from 2012-14 and served as Minister of State for Northern Ireland between 2014-15.

In this piece, Andrew draws on his personal understanding of the Armed Forces, as well as his extensive health and defence experience in Parliament. He considers a number of challenges facing military charities and questions the benefits of appointing a Secretary of State for Veterans. Amongst other issues, he carefully considers both the successes and improvements needed in treatment and the support available to veterans, along with the role that the Armed Forces Covenant plays in this.

From time to time military charities suggest that it would be a good idea to have a Secretary of State for Veterans. Parliament has debated it in an outing led by Plymouth MP and former Army Officer Johnny Mercer. In my view, it is a non-starter; the recipe for confusion and bureaucracy. What we do need, the military charity sector needs, is Minister of State level representation, say the Number Two in the Ministry of Defence, to cover both veterans and service personnel, along with their families. "People" are the greatest single factor in the defence of our country and need to have their interests represented. There is however, no need to be like the USA, as we have departments that do the job already, such as the NHS.

Under the NHS's constitution, patients must be treated according to clinical need but the Military Covenant's demands servicemen suffer "no disadvantage" from their service. In practice, seriously injured service men and women are accorded priority by the system for service attributable injury. In both prosthetics and mental health, there is an advantage given to service personnel if injury or illness is attributable to their time with the armed forces. However, it can be difficult for them to access the services as GPs are not aware of what is available since veterans will form a small part of their caseload.

When it comes to mental health provision, there has been a big improvement in the last few years. My report, *Fighting Fit*, completed in 2011, was entirely accepted by the Government of the day and David Cameron ran with all the recommendations for veterans' care. This has led to a change for the better for veterans and current servicemen and women.

There are, however, areas that need more attention, such as alcohol abuse and domestic violence, and mental health connected issues, with particular Service twists.

Housing is one of the most prevalent concerns in the Service community. Changes to the rules on social housing have helped. Previously, if you were stationed in say Warminster for twenty years but came from Lancashire, you did not have the housing list priority that other locals enjoyed. Now it is recognised that where you are based whilst still serving is your place of residence for the purposes of getting social housing.

The Military Covenant is all about fairness. It is not about giving an advantage beyond that enjoyed by civilians. Among NATO countries that sort of 'citizen-plus' model applies only in the USA.

A separate government department for veterans in the UK would be difficult since the services it would supervise are currently the responsibility of a wide range of other departments – Health, Education, Communities and Local Government etc. It would be, in my view, impossible to take those competences out of their current departments just for veterans. It would, however, be perfectly reasonable to insist that the Number Two minister at Defence was the veterans minister, the person overseeing the Military Covenant.

A development of this sort would give the Service community and military charities the sense that their needs are being addressed at an appropriate level.

Of all the issues denting Service morale at the moment, litigation and the march of 'warfare' are writ large. We have seen ageing veterans of Northern Ireland being hounded at the same time as younger veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. Number 10 has used robust language recently and Mrs May has made her position very clear. She has said that the UK will derogate from the European Convention on Human Rights in respect of future conflicts and this is to be welcomed as a positive step entirely in keeping with our duty to uphold the Military Covenant.

Despite much huff and puff about security, Brexit will have little impact on the UK's military. However, the spectre of our military being rolled into a European Army has now receded. We will now not have to test the UK's Military Covenant against provision made for Servicemen and women in other EU countries. Neither will we have to gauge whether tomorrow's recruits would be attracted to or repelled by the prospect, however distant, of serving not the Crown but the institutions of the European Union.

At present, most military charities do not receive substantial government funding. This is a point of strength since it broadens the stakeholder base and promotes independence. Being independent is especially important in the sector since it leaves charities free to criticise Government. It is surely right that national institutions like The Royal British Legion can lobby without fear or favour on behalf of its beneficiaries who do not have recourse to the industrial instruments and interventions available to civilians. This independence is a hallmark of military charities and allows them to stand out from other charitable sectors. Long may it continue.

In Conversation with Dorinda Wolfe Murray

Dorinda is a Founding Trustee of the FirstLight Trust. It was established as a charity for the Armed Forces 'with a difference'. It seeks to help veterans who are defined as 'hard to reach' by other charities. FirstLight aims to help these vulnerable veterans feel they are valued and have a sense of belonging, helping them out of isolation and to reintegrate into civilian society. FirstLight also actively supports emergency services' personnel in need.

In her discussion, Dorinda shares her experiences of working with FirstLight and its history. She offers her observations of the challenges facing the military charities sector and suggestions of how it can develop more effectively.

I am a founding trustee of the charity FirstLight Trust, which was created through identifying a need to support veterans' rehabilitate back into their communities after they had been to treatment centres such as those that Combat Stress provide. Adjusting is hard for veterans at the best of times – transition from the armed forces to civilian life is tough however you cut it. And if you have been 'away' on a course that is dealing with mental health, coming back into your community brings particular challenges of adjustment. FirstLight evolved from that desire to create a network of support so that no veteran – at street level – would be ignorant of where to get help.

We were determined not be a 'kitchen table' charity and so obtained the best professional advice. Purposefully, we have a huge remit, which allows for change over time, as we didn't want to be curtailed in who we could help and how. This has enabled us to flex and adapt in a way that other charities frequently cannot. As with start-up businesses, a lot of smaller charities go wrong because the 'entrepreneurs' who start things aren't necessarily the people who can develop them. Entrepreneurial people are often full of vision but unable to maintain the drive and/or successfully manage expansion over time. Almost every small charity founder, including those in the military sub sector, surround themselves with 'yes' people for a variety of reasons – they want to protect their vision and themselves: but it can result in burnout and so called 'founder syndrome'. You need at least a couple of dedicated people to start up and work together on any new charity or business.

Which touches on another point – I have seen some big charities in other sectors run as big businesses – in the widest sense of the world. A bit like politics, it can easily become a place that a few operate and few benefit. To a degree, they can lose touch with what they are there to do; they don't truly understand what is going on on the ground.

We started off in a small town – Scarborough. It is often the case that small charities are locally based. And many of these locales are geographically isolated with a paucity of services that are usually readily available in the cities. There are criticisms that there are too many charities in the third sector but there are gaps in services and support, and the Charity Commission only lets you set up where there is an identified gap to fill; often where the existing bigger and more established charities don't – or can't – provide the reach. The more local the charity the more able they are to help within a specific community. As long as they are well governed, with their heart in the right place, their head in the right place and with a clear purpose, then most other things tend to flow from that. They can help those that need it.

I come from an armed forces family with the ethos that an officer looks after his men. Which in part explains the strength of the Armed Forces charitable sector. We need to be responsible for ourselves; the Government should not and cannot do everything. There are many complaints about the Ministry of Defence, about the way our veterans are treated, but no other organisation looks after ex-workers 50 years after they have left. This is, of course, is balanced by the fact that other organisations tend not to ask to put your life on the line! Being a veteran can define people; for some it is the pride, the best part of their life but for most it forms part of, but not the whole of, their life. The counterpoint to this is that when an individual comes out of the military, and the transition goes wrong, blame can be passed back to that 'high point'.

When it comes to whether there should be a Ministry for Veterans, my massive caveat would be it depends on who is running it. There is a concern that much of the charity sector suffers from revolving door syndrome, without enough outside input. The third sector is huge, with large amounts of money – which begs the question: given so many of these charities have been around for so long and given their size, their supposed influence and their bank balances, how come they haven't found a way to work together to solve the problems faster and better? Ironic as it may be, the third sector can have brilliant solutions to problems; necessity is the mother of invention. Being new on the block and having been self-employed and in business most of my life, perhaps I look at things differently. I am lucky enough to have seen things go wrong and to have learnt from them. Part of that learning curve has been ensuring that I have an awesome board of trustees and advisers who keep me in line. We have no 'no go' areas. We support veterans come what may.

FirstLight works in a very female way: it is lateral, it is about relationships and empathy – not sympathy. For some people that is hard to get their heads around. We facilitate other charities to carry out their roles; we complement, we ensure we do not overlap in the localities we work within. Every charity's aim should include becoming redundant. I hope that in due course FirstLight will wind up as we will have done our job by creating a national, street level network of support for veterans.

Ensuring that we do not replicate other charities services is very important. With specialist charities in specialist sectors it is easy to create a 'silo' with residential care, support systems and courses. Veterans respond well when working/treated with other veterans; after all they worked as a team within the Armed Forces and their ethos is about support, back up and not 'leaving anyone behind'. The problem comes with integration/rehabilitation into a wider society that does not necessarily understand that ethos. Without comprehensive support, outreach, understanding and the opportunity to integrate into the wider community, these courses fail at the point at which the veterans have to operate outside the silo and in the real world. The toolkit won't work properly. That is where we come in. When we go into a community with our café/drop in/hub we bed-in fully with what is already there and provide an access point on the street. We are open six or seven days a week for drop in, not just online or on the phone, but with a physical presence.

70-95% of the Veterans we help are in the 4% that have ‘failed’ with other support. We act as the pin within the wheel joining up all the ‘spokes’ of statutory services/charities that are accessible for that veteran. But if the wheel doesn’t work properly, we will plug the gap by funding it. For example, in Scarborough we facilitate the delivery of EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing – a therapy to help treat trauma, which can be available on the NHS depending where you are, and depending on how long you are prepared to wait), social support, therapeutic massage, counselling, activities with a variety of independent experts. We don’t replicate, but by augmenting existing good services it can make a massive difference. It is in everyone’s interest that we don’t waste money or work against what exists already – we cooperate, facilitate and bang heads together. We are not into treading on anyone’s toes; we are helping veterans access all of these amazing services through our drop-ins/hubs and effectively bringing veterans to them.

Cobseo (The Confederation of Service Charities) represents the big Armed Forces charities and although we are a small charity, we do belong. If you look at the number of charities in Cobseo versus the total number in the Armed Forces sector (which is around 300 out of over 2000) it is worth questioning how much of a voice smaller charities have within it.

I have a lot of time for The Charity Commission, which is doing an amazing job in a difficult time and in an ‘interesting’ sector. It is extraordinary that governance is still an issue for some of the big charities as they really should have that sorted. Cobseo could work with the smaller charities by investigating what they need, and support those on the ground do what they do better. Support, help and understanding is what is needed not the fear of a hidden agenda i.e. being shut down.

The Timpson ethos of ‘customer comes first’ is embedded in our charity, and one of our trustees is a director of Timpson. If you set up in one locale to do one thing, you are affected and formed by that locale. It becomes easy to naval gaze and lose sight of the bigger picture; the trick is to be able to respond to change and continue to be effective. Working against something but not for anything positive is not a route to success. Each military charity and indeed the whole third sector needs to remember the people they are there to serve come first every time.

In Conversation with Robert Lawrence MC

Robert served in the Falklands War with the Scots Guards as a lieutenant, rising to the rank of captain. He was severely wounded during the conflict at the Battle of Mount Tumbledown, being awarded the Military Cross for his bravery.

In an insightful and personal discourse, Robert recalls his response to the care available to him when he returned from the Falklands and reflects on the challenges facing the military charities sector today. He makes an impassioned case for military hospitals separate from the NHS; reform to the Charity Commission; and the appointment of a Veterans' Minister, amongst many other observations and suggestions.

When I returned, very badly injured, from the Falklands, I was appalled at the care available. When I got back there were still military hospitals, which have since been closed. I believe that there should still be separate ones, separately funded and separately run. With top class specialist medics, these could be used for civilian disasters – such as terrorist attacks the like of which we've seen in France in 2015 and 2016 – as well as by service personnel and veterans. The NHS can't provide this service and nor can charities.

There is a fundamental flaw with the way the Charity Commission regulates charities. It asks for specific aims and targeted support. An example is Help for Heroes, which, when it was founded was amazing at PR and fundraising but its only aim was supposed to be to build a swimming pool for injured servicemen and women returning from post 9/11 conflicts. It was too successful for its own good and had millions to spend. There had to be agreement from the Charity Commission to expand its aims, the charity was in flux and it caused mayhem. There should be more flexibility from the Charity Commission.

It is very different in America. Yes, there are a lot of veterans' charities but it also created a Veterans' Agency, whilst here we did nothing. If, as a wounded veteran, I have a problem there is no one I can go to now: not the Ministry of Defence (MoD); not the NHS – no one is accountable. This is true for vast numbers of men and women who put their lives on the line for the Government. The bottom line is that we are reliant on charity, whereas it should be the Government's responsibility from beginning to end – from the moment a serviceman or woman signs up until after they die, whatever the cause. That is how it works in business: you commission new machinery, you get the benefit from it, you take responsibility for it. The same should be true for troops.

In my view, there should be a form of bonus points for veterans. A kind of payback that would give them priority in return for them risking their lives. This could be done with housing, for example. It could be done by the NHS – though at the moment it can't prioritise anyone by law.

We are supposed to have the Military Covenant. It says that the government will take care of service personnel and their families. It is broken. Our tradition is that we serve without question – just take the Queen's shilling. We are not legalistic or litigious. The relationship is inherently based upon trust. Without trust you cannot go to war, which is not true in civilian life. However, our trust in politicians is unfounded. They need to be responsible, with legal duties laid out as to what soldiers can expect. One recent improvement is that those called to the front line can now at least get proper insurance. It is a step in the right direction, but still no one is accountable.

Veterans from every conflict need support, regardless of age, which war or what regiment they were in. A number of big charities would benefit from a mix of veterans and their experiences – old and young learning from and supporting one another. The younger generation need to hear how the guy from Malaya rebuilt his life after the war or how the veteran from Northern Ireland overcame his struggles.

It is ironic that those who are injured but stay in the military are better off than those that leave. It tends to get really hard for them as reality hits after a year or more in civilian life. The charities that should be helping them are not always there when they are needed. The charities are needed but are not the only answer. The regiments are another part of the solution but with cutbacks there are just not enough spare family support officers or padres to support both troops and their families. They just get back and are expected to crack on and get back to strength for the next operation. There is a gap and the MoD doesn't fill it. Whereas World War One and Two affected every family in the country, now we have hidden wars, servicemen and women can't even wear uniform on the street owing to terror threats, we may as well not exist to most people. The leaders ask for our lives, they should take responsibility for us as well, that means the politicians. General Sir Richard Dannatt, like me, spoke out. But he was put back in his box by his political masters. When voices such as his are ignored, we stand no chance.

So, what is the solution? First, individual charities need to define aims better and be more flexible. Second, the Charity Commission needs to understand the sector better and allow charities broader goals. This could be made possible through amalgamation of existing charities, they could also be broadened to include police, nurses, fireman, all of whom risk their lives for the civilian population. Perhaps Help for Heroes could give its money to SSAFA, Royal British Legion and so forth. Those in the sector should also be willing to learn from one another. All experiences and history should be brought together to keep honour and sharing going.

Ministers should take the responsibility for getting it right and provide confidence to veterans by having the money to back them up. We need a minister with teeth, with a department, if not necessarily a budget beyond running the department. They could oversee all the services and all military charities. One thing we do not need is more charities – the sector has enough. But they do require ministerial oversight. Regiments are too busy to provide pastoral care as it is needed. There should be a department responsible with a minister that is constantly looking to have genuine effects – to prioritise medical care, education and housing for veterans and their families. Veterans should be a priority for front line services.

The Charity Commission needs to have teeth too. Once a veteran, always a veteran, there should not be a time limit. Families of veterans and deceased soldiers are vulnerable and yet they have no one accountable to turn to. The Charity Commission

should be there to ensure that the right things are being done for the right people. Within charities there are governance issues – they are often run by soldiers for soldiers. This is positive because servicemen and women know how to run things and understand the needs of fellow veterans. But they are not charity professionals. This is another reason why we need a minister to oversee the military charity sector, to shut down failing charities if necessary or help when needed with specialist advisers. It could be done like special measures for schools, the Charity Commission can do this but it is too stretched to be effective. A minister would have a regulatory role, review charities performance, advise and provide six-month plans if needed. Regulation and oversight are good despite the fact that soldiers do know what soldiers need as they are veterans themselves.

In the UK we are proud and have stiff upper lips but we have also have to adapt to the modern world. We are insulated if we stay in the military but one day we have to leave. Our leaders, who asked for our lives, should lead by example and take responsibility when we return to civilian life. If you are a boss you stand up for your troops, the Government should be the same.

My recommendations are that 1) charities join forces and support ex-troops from all backgrounds and 2) a minister with real responsibility is appointed, with teeth and a department, so that those who need it have someone they can turn to. Then all current and ex service personnel can have the respect and support they deserve.

Adapting and Developing: Blesma, The Limbless Veterans

Brigadier Barry Le Grys MBE, has been the Chief Executive of Blesma, the specialist charity and association for limbless veterans, since March 2014. He worked in the offshore oil industry before attending Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. He was then commissioned into the Corps of Royal Engineers. He has commanded national and international forces up to brigade formation level, mostly overseas, and was professional head of the 13,000 strong Royal Engineers.

Barry shares the story of Blesma's development in recent years, including its internal workings from board level to membership. He considers a number of issues which the military charities sector is facing currently and may face in the future, including the importance of these charities remaining in step with the needs of those they support.

Blesma has been around for a long time so we take a long-term perspective. We draw on the experience of generations and are in it for the long haul. We have a membership of fellows with shared experiences and we are there when needed throughout their lives.

We work on the basis of member supporting member. Half of our board of trustees are members, demonstrating both our commitment to, and the influence of, our membership. We are a bottom up style charity and focusing on the needs of our membership keeps us relevant as times change.

Blesma works with the State. It is a long time since we marched on Number 10 during the inter-war years regarding the War Pension Scheme. Now, we work alongside it. We hold it to account but fill gaps. For example, the Government cannot provide fellowship, but we can. We provide support from welfare to wellbeing and advice. We know our way round the support available, including the National Health Service and provide help ensuring our members get the best treatment available, which has been important recently.

It is our members who keep us up to date. They have a say and a vote which makes us relevant to their lives and realities. Our principles have remained the same but how we deliver them keeps up with the times. We used to have an extensive branch network and supported 40-50,000 people through comradeship at local weekly meetings. Now, with fewer members, we have updated to an activity programme to bring them together and it is tailored to the individual.

Today, social engagement remains as important as ever, but it takes a different form. We know our members, so there is social media available, alongside hard copies of information and correspondence for the older generation.

To stay current, any charity or organisation must be clear about its purpose and values. We like to think that we have always been clear about this and if we stick to these core beliefs, then the public can donate to us and support us with a strong understanding of what our vision and mission is. The public funds us and we value them by respecting our founding values.

Our work continues despite the fact that there are no conflicts involving major British military operations on the ground. We have to continue to provide support as people get older, with the health issues and other complications that encompasses, but we also have to be ready in case there is another conflict. The public generally are very supportive of what we do, but we have to work to get the message through. Our message has to be a strong in order to be heard by our donors. We also use our amazing membership to spread our message to others.

Adversity can, for some, help them find a deeper purpose and inspire others. They often have a profound sense of gratitude both to the public and the State. We have benefited from this by introducing a training programme. We support members to have the confidence to give speeches to schools and youth workshops. Fifteen individuals reached over 3,000 youths last year and we are hoping to expand this reach to 7,000 in 2017. The schools we visit often ask us back. Our members are inspired by, and inspiring to young people; it is a win-win situation.

We are always scanning the horizon for change in medical advancements that may affect our members. We are also a conduit between departments within the Government, so that the best outcomes are available for our membership. For example, the Ministry of Defence may believe new technology should be available for amputees but the National Health Service may not want to pay for it. We are able to provide impartial advice. This process is good for the wider population as cutting edge technology developed for service personnel becomes available to civilians, for example microprocessing for knees will be available shortly to those who meet the NHS criteria.

Blesma is keen to make a national contribution. We step in to support and promote fairness, transparency and access. The system can fail individuals but we provide support in daily battles, we give advice and we lobby for support from other sources when it is needed.

We have our role to play, our lane to follow, and we are happy that the Government does not fund us. We would rather that money went into prosthetics and that we are there to provide support when there are shortcomings.

The UK has quite a history of the Government, charities and the public coming together for the greater good. A Minister of Veterans could not reach out to every single veteran and one of the roles of charity is to reach out. The State can provide some services, charities can provide others.

Blesma will be around for as long as people need us. A sign of a good charity is that it wraps up when there is no one in need of its support. We have a clear view of where we are going over the next five years and will be around for as long as people tell us they need us. If the public stop supporting us, we would have to ask ourselves, “why?”. We must always stay relevant, listen to our members and respect our supporters by representing our values.

A History of Blesma

Forty thousand servicemen lost limbs during the First World War – and lived to return to a “land fit for heroes”. They were swiftly disillusioned. The limbless gathered together in groups determined that if society would not help them, they would help themselves. So, the Limbless Ex-Service Men’s Association was born and grew, finally achieving national status in 1932 as the British Limbless Ex-Service Men’s Association – Blesma.

Since its creation, Blesma has lobbied successive governments to achieve improvements in pensions, in standards of artificial limbs and in the provision of suitable transport and employment opportunities. Residential homes have been opened and this care has been adapted now to help people in their own homes and communities. Wide ranging health and wellbeing services have been initiated, sporting activities undertaken and innovative research commissioned, all helped by the ceaseless fundraising activities of devoted members and supporters.

Recent history timeline:

- 1984 – Blesma starts regular adaptive skiing trips (ski-biking) for injured veterans. The Blesma activities programme has grown ever since.
- 2005 – All-amputee team sails Atlantic in an un-adapted yacht, a world first.
- June 2011 – Murrison Report *A better deal for military amputees* published leading to funding for nine limbs centres to specialise in veterans’ prosthetic care.
- 2012 – Veterans’ Prosthetic Panel – launched as a result of the Murrison Report. This procures leading technology for veterans with Service injuries.
- September 2014 – All-amputee veterans team swims the English Channel, a world record.
- September 2015 – The White Report published – written by Blesma Member Jon White, led to Defence Medical Services being opened up to Service injured veterans for whom the NHS system wasn’t working.
- December 2015 – Row2Recovery – all-amputee veterans team rows the Atlantic, another world first.
- December 2016 – Microprocessor assisted knees, already available to Service injured veterans, to become available to civilians and other veterans on the NHS.

Coordination: A Key Aim for the Sector

Tom Tugendhat MP, MBE, has been Member of Parliament for Tonbridge and Malling since 2015. A member of the Territorial Army, he was mobilised in 2003 at the outbreak of the Iraq War. Utilising his Arabic language skills, Tom served as an intelligence officer with the Royal Marines. During his military career, he saw operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan. He rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 2013 and later accepted a request to serve as the military assistant to the Chief of the Defence Staff. Tom remains a reserve officer.

In his article, Tom highlights the importance of cooperation amongst military charities, not only to ensure that they provide the best care and support to veterans, but in order to ensure they are effectively fulfilling their aims, minimising back office costs and maintaining the support of the public.

The growth of the military charity sector has been an extraordinary success. Over the past decade, the public have expressed, more fluently than any government could, the connection between the nation and those who serve in our armed forces. These charities are the living example of the Military Covenant.

People have charged up mountains and paddled oceans to raise money in any number of different appeals. The money raised has gone towards physical and mental injuries new and old. Families, friends and whole communities have been recognised as part of the recovery and support network for servicemen and women who need it.

As private initiatives, charities demonstrate their individuality through the innovative solutions they find in both raising and spending money. But the support to those in need and the amazing generosity of the British people lacks one thing to make it more effective – coordination.

Few charities manage the success of Help for Heroes. Capturing the public mood and achieving their clear aims very quickly the charity built a firm base allowing it to keep costs low and pass on the vast majority of the money raised to those in need. Sadly, for many, the initial good intention can be weighed down by the cost of bureaucracy and the money so generously given can disappear into administration. Working together on back office functions could liberate vast sums to help.

Coordination isn't just about management, it is also about delivery. Many charities overlap. Sometimes this is productive, coming up with new ideas to serve those in need better, but too often it leads to waste. This requires better engagement and is one area that the government could step in, not to take over, but to support change.

Over coming years as the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan slip from many people's focus, the interest in veterans' care may reduce. As that happens, it is essential we do what we can to ensure every penny is not only well spent but delivers for the greatest number of people.

That means increasing support to those who wish to coordinate amongst charities along with those parts of government, both national and local, that work on veterans' affairs. In coming years, while the sector has the opportunity to work quietly on delivering, the opportunity is also there to reform. The Government has a role but the real drive must come from the sector itself. The Royal British Legion, SSAFA, Help for Heroes, and many others should use their leadership position to help others.

The creativity of the charity sector is one of the great strengths of the British care system. It increases the amount available to those in need and experiments with innovative solutions. I look forward to seeing military charities coordinating between themselves and with the NHS, housing authorities and many more organisations to do even better and help those who have given their all for us.

Communications and Fundraising

Tim Brann is the Director of Fundraising at the King Edward VII Hospital. He has over 25 years' of experience in fundraising and has worked with numerous charities. His previous role was as Director of Fundraising and Communications at the charity Combat Stress.

In his article, Tim discusses communications and how it affects fundraising, as well as the challenges that come with trying to find a single 'voice' for the sector.

The number of veterans in the UK remains high, currently estimated at between 2.5 and 3.5 million, meaning the veteran community influences the whole of society. The charity sector representing veterans is extensive and tries to communicate coherently. Cobseo (The Confederation of Service Charities) – effectively the trade body – has about 300 members and seeks to provide a voice for the whole sector. The voice, however, often comes from the media and it lumps everyone together. This means that a small scandal in a small charity affects the whole military charity sector. It makes it easy for the sector to get a bad name.

King Edward VII Hospital has set up a research team that will collate research from a wide variety of sources, both here and internationally, to enable Cobseo to speak with greater authority on a wide variety of subjects and to represent the sector with evidence-based research.

This is coupled with our 116 year history of helping veterans by providing world-class medical treatment, at a discounted rate, or via a means-tested grant system. The stories in the press inevitably have an influence on fundraising. Military charities always have a compelling story to tell which in turn helps to attract donations – and rightly so. With regimental charities there is also loyalty and love from their veterans, who carry on supporting them after they leave. The general public can get fed up with hearing negative stories but still see the reality and give generously. Raising money is a very competitive business. The recent fundraising scandals have been a wakeup call to the whole charity sector. Governance in too many cases has been weak. Military charities should be leading the way with top people making good decisions.

In order to raise funds charities need to create a clear narrative of what we do, so that we are not all chasing the same pound. If a big charity were to fail it would hurt the whole sector.

When it comes to communications and fundraising, the vast majority of the military charity arena has a great story to tell. It needs its voice to be heard by Parliament and by the public who give so generously to these important causes. We must work together to ensure that we are listened to where it matters.

Investment Strategies for Military Charities

James Codrington is an investment director at Rathbones and was previously Head of Charities at Barings. During his career, he has developed a specialist knowledge and understanding of charity investment, advising a variety of clients. He served in the British Army from 1988 to 1994.

In his article, James shares his expertise and insights into investment strategies for military charities, providing in-depth analysis of changes to these strategies over time and the investment challenges facing the sector today.

Trustees of military charities share many of the same problems as other charities when dealing with investment. As Errol Flynn put it, “my problem lies in reconciling my gross habits with my net income”. But negotiating the tricky path between capital preservation, for future beneficiaries, and generating a return for today, all with an acceptable level of risk, can be particularly difficult when the legacy of conflict can last the lifetime of a once-young recruit.

Given the uncertainty of the open-ended commitments made by military charities, it might be tempting to reach for the comfort blanket of a benchmark. Yet a little clear thinking at the outset can save time and money. For a start, peer group benchmarks can force investors to follow the herd, with little relation to a charity’s own requirements or risk tolerance. Watson Wyatt in 2003 noted that “Benchmarks... have accentuated short-termism and have at times stifled creativity.”¹ Meanwhile, index benchmarks overweight, overvalued assets and underweight, undervalued assets; capital is being allocated to size, which is the result of past history.²

¹ Source: Watson Wyatt, ‘“Absolute return investing” and Ten-year Mandates’, May 2003.

² The rebalancing of tracker funds is usually conducted on a price basis. The Japanese stock market bubble saw Japan’s share of the MSCI World equity market cap explode from 21% in 1983 to a high of 51% by 1989; the TMT-fuelled bubble saw the share of the US in the benchmark world index rise from 30% to 50% between 1994 and 2001. In both cases, investors who tracked the world equity benchmark had half of their capital invested in underlying markets trading at 5.5 times book value and over 30 times annual trailing earnings. In both cases, a decade-long period

Much academic research considers that asset allocation is the main driver of returns.³ Perhaps then one should simply pick the best returning asset and put everything in it. This would be tempting when you look at the long-term returns from UK equities, bonds and cash. £1 invested in equities in 1900 would have grown to £22,654 by the end of 2015, putting bonds and cash in the shade – the return from long bonds would have been £364 and from cash, £205.⁴

However, this approach would require a strong stomach. Even in a lower volatility market such as the UK, movements can be huge: for example, UK equities fell over 50% in 1974 and rose 149% in 1975.⁵

The long-term investor might think that he or she can cope with such volatility. But the longest run of cumulative negative returns from equities has been 22 years in the UK, 16 years in the US, 55 in Germany and 51 in Japan.⁶ Furthermore, reference to returns since 1900 is all well and good but the bulk of those returns were actually concentrated in four decades: the post-war recoveries of the 1920s and the 1950s, and the ‘windfall’ gains of the 1980s and 1990s (supply side reforms, disinflation, the end of the cold war, etc).

of substantial relative underperformance followed. Unquestioning adherence to trackers is perhaps even more damaging in fixed income markets, where the most heavily indebted issuers receive the largest constituent weightings. The use of trackers is often justified by reference to the Efficient Market Hypothesis, but as Buffett noted, “I’d be a bum in the street with a tin cup if the markets were efficient”.

³ For example, Brinson, Hood and Beebower, “Determinants of Portfolio Performance”, *Financial Analysts Journal*, July/August 1986; Ibbotson & Kaplan, “Does Asset Allocation explain 40, 90, or 100% of performance?”, *Financial Analysts Journal*, January/February 2000.

⁴ Source: Barclays Equity Gilt Study 2016. Note that such returns are with income re-invested – and investors don’t typically re-invest their income. If they did, then those historical returns would have been unachievable. For equities, the compounding cascade of re-invested dividends would drive prices up and hence future returns down, and would lower the cost of capital, encouraging firms to make poor investments and ultimately destroy their profits (and thus their dividends). For bonds, re-investing income is even more unsustainable: to reinvest in corporate bonds requires an increasing supply of corporate debt to invest in. I.e. the long run returns are valid - so long as investors don’t actually try to capture those returns!

⁵ Source: Barclays Equity Gilt Study 2011.

⁶ Source: Global investment returns yearbook 2006, ABN Amro, February 2006.

The ‘obvious’ solution to such volatility is to diversify, by having a portion of bonds in the portfolio, so when equities go down, bonds go up. But bonds and equities are often not uncorrelated⁷ enough to reduce the risk in a portfolio – both asset classes can go up or down together.

Thus the quest for consistently positive returns must take us beyond traditional benchmarks. The example of the Yale Endowment is instructive: in 2009 it had 24% in hedge funds; 24% in private equity, 31% in ‘real assets’ i.e. oil and gas, property and timber, but only 21% in bonds and equities. It achieved a ten year average return of 11.8% versus 1.7% from a 60/40 allocation to US equities and bonds.⁸ However, even the Yale Foundation fell some 25% in the fiscal year to 30th June 2009.⁹ David Swenson, Yale’s investment chief, said in his defence that “There isn’t an investment strategy that can produce the kind of long-term results we’ve generated at Yale that isn’t going to post the occasional negative return... Judging a long-term investment strategy based on the results of a five-to six-month period is foolish beyond words.”¹⁰

This should lead to a more nuanced approach: the achievement of the best available risk-adjusted returns with the possibility of losses in the short term, rather than the ‘absolute return’ mantra that there should never be a negative return. ‘Safe’ assets may provide disappointing capital growth, generally scarcely above inflation, over the longer term. Generating a sensible level of income as part of your expected total return is a hedge against the main pitfall of an absolute return approach, which is that in bad years, you can get absolutely nothing. But one should not feel forced into assets just because of their yield – remember that before 2008, the banks provided roughly a third of the UK equity market’s dividend income. And a large chunk of bonds in your portfolio could effectively be turning capital into income.

⁷ Correlation measures the extent to which two separate variables move together.

⁸ Source: Yale University, 30/06/09.

⁹ Source: Yale University, 22/09/09.

¹⁰ Source: Bloomberg, 02/01/09.

If long-term returns are driven by slow moving macro-economic variables, then it makes sense to construct portfolios by combining long-term forecasts for each asset with its volatility profile, to get the most return for the least risk. This leaves little room for mediocre assets – if you like an asset, hold enough to make a difference; if not, have none – don't invest simply to have a 'diversified' portfolio. Back in 2007, asset classes which were seemingly uncorrelated (therefore in theory providing diversification), such as property, hedge funds, private equity and corporate credit, were all united in their exposure to leverage. In fact, many hedge funds had become little more than leveraged momentum plays, and in 2008 the HFRX Sterling hedged fund of funds index returned -22.9%, little better than conventional equity funds.

In short, it paid a charity at the beginning of 2007 to narrow down its assets, rather than have a greater spread in pursuit of diversification. As Warren Buffett remarked, "Portfolio concentration may well decrease risk if it raises, as it should, both the intensity with which an investor thinks about a business and the comfort level he must feel with its economic characteristics before buying into it."¹¹ Or, as he more often quoted as saying, "Wide diversification is a protection against ignorance."

¹¹ Source: Berkshire Hathaway Inc, 1993 letter to shareholders; <http://www.berkshirehathaway.com/letters/1993.html>

Requirement and Provision

Annunziata Rees-Mogg is a Director of Wild Search, focussing on charity recruitment. During her career, she has worked alongside both charities and foundations, advising on executive and trustee appointments. She serves as a trustee of a charitable trust and volunteers for a charity supporting underprivileged students into careers. Her husband served in Iraq and was part of the reconstruction efforts in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Following dozens of conversations with military charity volunteers, executives and trustees, Annunziata highlights the great responsibility we all have for our veterans, from cradle to grave, and examines what is needed to ensure that the support beneficiaries deserve is adequately provided.

The most important thing for current service personnel and veterans is that their trust is earned and that there is a credible, realistic and reliable provision for them. Their concern is not where this comes from – charity or government. What matters is that it not only covers their treatment during service but afterwards too: especially if something goes wrong. Both full-time service personnel and reservists should be able to obtain appropriate consideration for their sacrifices. Provision of such support is, and should be, pan-government, not just provided by the Ministry of Defence (MoD). On top of that, charities have a huge role to play that government cannot.

The last Government introduced the Armed Forces Covenant. It stated that there should be no disadvantage from serving, with special treatment for particular individuals, such as those who were wounded during service. In the last four or five years, there has been progress in removing disadvantage, for example, for obtaining school places, staying in place on NHS waiting lists and housing. Service personnel do not only suffer in warzones but endure the dislocation of moving from barracks to barracks and country to country. Currently, there is a cross-government provision, from departments including Work & Pensions, Health, Education and, of course, the MoD, all trying to work in a coordinated way under the Cabinet Office.

There is the annual report on the state of the Covenant, which alongside the governmental assessment also draws on feedback from the devolved nations and has comments from charities and external organisations. The most recent report on the state of the Covenant, published in December 2016, suggests there has been real progress. It concludes that “We have continued to make good progress this year in delivering the Nation’s promise to the Armed Forces to ensure that they are treated fairly. We maintain our pledge that across Government, and in collaboration with the devolved administrations, local Government, the charitable sector and the rest of society, we will continue striving to deliver an enduring network of support for the Armed Forces community, through the Armed Forces Covenant, that is the best it can possibly be.”¹

However, not all agree with this analysis, and people do ask if there would be a superior provision if there were a specific Cabinet Minister or Commissioner to oversee all current and former service personnel’s care. The Minister for Defence Personnel and Reservists, Mark Lancaster, shows that support can be delivered, however, the debate is still open as to whether this could be improved.

In terms of where help comes from for those who need it, our nation has a wonderful legacy of people helping alongside government: this should be celebrated. However, public generosity cannot be treated as a plug for government spending. Across the board, budgets are under pressure. Everything from the NHS to Local Government is being squeezed and it is not realistic to expect money to be thrown at any one sector. Therefore, we have reached a point at which the country’s generosity is crucial.

The big question remains: how are individual donations turned into the support that ex-service personnel deserve? In the military charity arena there are four main subsectors:

- the large tri-service charities;
- service specific ones backed up by the grant givers and regimental charities;
- specialist charities;
- micro charities (which are often community-based).

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/588140/30012016_AFC_Report_FINAL_WEB.PDF

This structure works well for the sector, with each filling gaps between the others. All four levels aim to provide support as appropriate but all are facing fundraising challenges. Not only has the whole charity sector been hit by negative headlines regarding money raising techniques that have constricted donations, but with the new fundraising regulator some are having to alter their income generation methodologies. Also, specifically in the military charity sub-sector, if you look at the demographics, the numbers of individuals and families connected to the armed forces is shrinking. The low level of interest rates also hits those foundations and charities with endowments that need to create income.

There is also, rightly, more scrutiny of the governance of charities. The recent scandals in the sector, such as Kids Company, have created a difficult climate for all charities, including the military ones.

What are charities doing to overcome these challenges? It appears unlikely that there will be great consolidation of military charities in the short term although it is not impossible that some smaller charities will fold into larger ones which would be helpful. Whatever happens in terms of mergers, the whole sector should work more closely together in these challenging financial times. One useful addition will be The Veterans' Gateway, which is being created and has been given £2 million of Libor money, in order to help ex-service personnel identify how to get the help they need. This will go live later this year and is a consortium of charities led by the Royal British Legion aiming to provide better support to ex-servicemen and women. It will help veterans find and access advice and support on a broad range of issues, including healthcare and housing. This new service will provide a 24/7 phone number, a dedicated website and a mobile app so that those in need can find out where best to turn.

Ultimately, it does not matter where support comes from. Whether the public purse provides support or charitable donations do, it is less relevant than the sustainability of the provision. However, there is a concern, raised from within the sector, that there is not enough expertise in some military charities to deliver on the trust placed in them. Finding the right personnel to run charities is a challenge and one that service charities are not immune from. Whilst the empathy provided by a fellow ex-serviceman or woman is unquestionably crucial, it may not ensure the governance oversight or financial rigour that donors and beneficiaries alike should deserve. The sector has woken up to this and is increasingly looking to recruit and retain individuals with the experience, expertise and vision required to ensure that all recipients are provided with the best support available. It will be this coordination of effort, support from the public, clear vision and flexibility that, alongside the Government adhering to the Covenant, will ensure the trust servicemen and women place in their country is repaid from cradle to grave.

Charities and Careers

Edward Wild is the Managing Director at Wild Search and has worked as a headhunter since 2004, advising a broad range of clients on senior appointments across charities, education and the public sector (including the Ministry of Defence).

In his article, Edward considers the opportunities which military service brings to the commercial and charity sectors.

Leadership of military charities and appointments to their boards underpin the key themes raised within this report. This publication has considered different aspects of how military charities have evolved and how they operate. It has been produced as a result of meetings and interviews with a broad range of those working in the sector. It has been fascinating to hear, first hand, what the challenges and opportunities are and to learn more about the remarkable work being done by so many organisations.

Recruiting the best candidates for leadership roles and to boards is a subject of significant interest to all at Wild Search. Another aspect which we, as headhunters working with clients and employers outside the military charities subsector, consider is candidates whose careers have included time in the Services and who are considering a new direction. This could be mid-career or later on, either looking for a final full-time role or considering a portfolio of appointments.

During my 13 years as a headhunter, I have frequently identified candidates for clients – in charities and other sectors – who have served in the armed forces, whether full time or as Reservists. In a number of instances, clients have shortlisted and appointed candidates, either directly after their time in the armed forces or those who have an earlier background in them. The experience of assessing a context, engaging with those working at all levels and the capacity to make quick decisions in the face of complex factors; combined with a commitment to seeing through challenges and making changes within an organisation, are all important elements that such candidates can bring to a non-military context.

Therefore, it is important to highlight the work being done by charities dealing with military personnel who are seeking a new career outside the armed forces: charities such as RFEA (The Forces Employment Charity), the Officers' Association (supported by ABF – The Soldiers' Charity), The Poppy Factory, Royal British Legion and the White Ensign Association. Equally important are social enterprises, such as SaluteMyJob. All of these organisations contribute to ensuring that candidates from the armed forces, and employers who are seeking the skills and experience that military service brings, are brought together. As with the support provided by other charities focussed on the health and welfare of service personnel, these organisations have an important role to play.

Moving from the armed forces to working within military charities is a well-trodden path and an appealing opportunity for many who wish to use their military experience to benefit those who are still in service. For other career choices, further education and training may be required, but in many instances, experience within the armed forces – especially in leadership roles – will often be sought after by employers.

All charities that support those making a transition from military to civilian life contribute to not only supporting the individuals but also to providing employers with an opportunity to enrich and strengthen their leadership and wider teams, as well as to ensure that veterans' service to their country continues to contribute to the greater benefit of society.

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Annex A: The Armed Forces Covenant

An Enduring Covenant Between
The People of the United Kingdom
Her Majesty's Government
– and –

All those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown
And their Families

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces. In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.

This obligation involves the whole of society: it includes voluntary and charitable bodies, private organisations, and the actions of individuals in supporting the Armed Forces. Recognising those who have performed military duty unites the country and demonstrates the value of their contribution. This has no greater expression than in upholding this Covenant.

About Wild Search

Wild Search is an established, well connected and innovative executive search and advisory company. Our team brings a formidable and constantly evolving network of contacts on which we draw during every search, focused on charities, education, membership bodies and property and rural-based organisations.

Now in our seventh year, we have served a diverse range of more than 100 clients, resulting in more than 150 appointments being made. Ensuring that our clients are satisfied with our work at every stage of the appointment process is a key objective and that the appointed candidates make the required impact. That is why a growing number of clients come back to us as subsequent requirements arise.

We believe in establishing long-term relationships, both with clients and with the outstanding candidates we identify for specific assignments, which forms part of our wider commitment to developing our market knowledge. The Wild Search community encompasses a broad range of people and organisations which ensures both strength and depth in all our work.

Process and outcome both matter to us and we are firmly committed to providing a strong methodology and rigorous approach to all our work which combines transparency with a sharp focus on understanding the key requirements of each organisation for which we are working.

About Wild ReSearch

Wild ReSearch is the thought-leadership and publishing division of Wild Search.

Since 2011, we have produced fifteen publications on both policy-related issues and corporate histories.

For more information, please visit www.wildsearch.org.

About Rathbones

Rathbones

Look forward

Rathbones is proud to manage over £4 billion* of assets for nearly 1,200 UK charities, making us the fourth largest manager of charity assets in the UK. We are a specialist charity team with 20 dedicated investment managers, not a private client or institutional team that happens to deal with charities from time to time. Half of us are charity trustees, underlining a personal as well as professional commitment to the sector. We can harness the experience of 281 investment professionals to benefit your charity portfolio. Rathbones has been in business since 1742. Looking forward has carried us and our clients safely through many eras. We continue to move with the times, blending new ideas and the latest technology with our long-standing investment experience and constant values.

*As at 31 December 2016

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